

CHAPTER 2

ST. MICHAEL'S BECOMES ST. THOMAS: 1902-1923

Bishop Thomas Barry

James Rogers, the first Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Chatham, retired in February, 1902, at seventy-six years of age. His replacement, the second Bishop of Chatham, Fr. Thomas Francis Barry, now sixty-one, had been his close assistant for many years. B. J. Murdock, in *Partway Through*, described Barry as:

a tall slow-moving man, with a manner seemingly cold, which his austere bearing seemed to increase. Yet he was very understanding and always weighed very deliberately, very carefully, all matters for decision. Then, when there was need for kindness, he could be very kind. He also had a sense of humour.

In 1885, when Rogers had asked Barry, then his Chancellor for the diocese, to consider reopening St. Michael's College, the latter had argued against the idea since he felt there was little hope of it succeeding at that time. Besides, as vicar-general for the diocese he had other, more pressing concerns. Yet looking through his correspondence we can see he remained deeply committed to getting St. Michael's up and running again. He had assured the bishop that he would reopen the college when he felt the time was right. In return, Rogers kept Barry well informed of his hopes and plans for their mutually treasured institution.

Shortly after he accepted his bishop's mitre, Barry indeed turned his attention to the matter of reopening St. Michael's. In October, 1902, we find him appealing to the Jesuits, as Rogers had done years before in 1869. Then, after they declined yet again to come to Chatham, he approached the

Marists, the order that Rogers had also made overtures to in the early 1870s. They, too, remained uninterested.

The solution, he concluded, lay in making some creative administrative rearrangements. He approached the Bishop of Saint John and the Archbishop of Halifax with a plan to form a new French diocese in the northern part of the province, one that would include the Acadian areas of Madawaska, Gloucester and Restigouche. He suggested that it might satisfy the desires of the Acadian residents to give them their own bishop and thus a representative in the church hierarchy. At the same time, Barry proposed extending the boundaries of the Chatham Diocese in a southerly direction to include the primarily English-speaking counties of York and Carleton.

In Barry's view, a new French diocese for the francophone population to the north would be the best way to preserve Chatham within an English-speaking diocese, thus "perpetuating its English tradition," which he considered "very important in this almost entirely English-speaking Province." Bathurst, in his view, would make an ideal see for the new French diocese, since there was a large church there that could serve as a cathedral. The French college in Caraquet, founded in 1899 and run by the Eudist Order, he suggested could serve the educational needs of francophone boys.

A new diocese would certainly make things more manageable for Barry. He would no longer be responsible for the religious needs of the many small Acadian communities. Nor would he have the problem of coping with their linguistic needs. He suggested that, if these changes were made, he could turn to the generosity of Chatham's residents to help him finish construction of St. Michael's Cathedral, begun a few years earlier but with the interior still unfinished. He also wanted to build a bishop's residence nearby and, finally, to restore and reopen St. Michael's College.

If the college in Chatham could be reopened, urged Barry, it would take care of the educational needs of the local English-speaking boys. It would provide them with a better education than the public school system, giving opportunities to those who could not at present afford to leave home to further

their education or to find employment elsewhere. That need, he argued, was especially great in the early years of the twentieth century because of the declining employment opportunities in the area. Furthermore, reopening the college could give life to Bishop Rogers's original desire: to open a path to the priesthood for some of the English-speaking Catholic youths.

His arguments won over the archbishop. A delegation entrusted with presenting the proposal was sent to Rome. Unfortunately, the authorities at the Vatican did not see things in the same light as the Canadians. In fairness it is understandable that, seen from Rome, the sparse population of the entire Canadian Maritimes was the determining factor. The issue of linguistic differences were of local and therefore minor importance. Furthermore, creation of a new diocese would entail considerable expense. Thus, in 1909, the Vatican rejected the idea of creating a new diocese in the northern, French-speaking part of the province and an enlarged one for the English-speaking areas. It would take another twenty-five years before Barry's visionary proposal would be realized.

For the moment, however, as a result of the Vatican's decision Barry saw nothing but problems ahead for his diocese and his educational plans. He lamented: "Oh why did they not accept our offer for a division of the Diocese." And he was right. The ethnic differences in northern New Brunswick would continue to bedevil Church affairs and especially the attempt to re-establish St. Michael's as the area's English-speaking college.

Basilian Fathers to the Rescue

It was during his visit to Rome, however, that the bishop's vicar-general for the diocese, Fr. Henry O'Leary, found a solution. O'Leary was the younger of two brothers from Richibucto, New Brunswick, who had remarkably similar careers. Both Henry and his brother Louis had attended St. Joseph's College in Memramcook and the Grand Séminaire in Montreal. One was ordained in 1900, the other in 1901. Both spent several years in Rome together, studying for their doctorates. Both had

returned to New Brunswick to serve in the Chatham diocese. In 1908, Henry was appointed Vicar-General for the diocese, Louis its Chancellor. Both were literary, scholarly men, keenly interested in developing educational opportunities for the people of northern New Brunswick, both strongly supportive of Barry's efforts to reopen St. Michael's College.

Henry O'Leary, therefore, in Rome as the bishop's vicar-general, had Barry's interests for the college at heart. Before returning home he wrote Barry that he had contacted some of "the principal men" of the Order of St. Basil who happened to be in Rome on business. The Basilians, an order of Catholic priests and seminarians originating in France in 1822, were particularly interested in secondary and higher education. One of these Basilians was Fr. Kelly, a priest from Toronto staying at the Canadian College in Rome. O'Leary and Kelly discussed the possibility of the Basilians reopening St. Michael's College in Chatham, sitting empty now since the unhappy departure of the Christian Brothers several years earlier. Kelly had encouraging news. His order was just now expanding its work in Canada and the United States. He suggested to O'Leary that the Basilians might indeed be willing to reopen the college in Chatham in order to attract young men to the priesthood. They might even be willing to lose money "for the first years, if the prospects for English vocations" were good. Kelly understood that many of the Catholics residing in the Chatham Diocese were French-speaking Acadians and cautioned O'Leary that the Basilians would only be able to provide English priests. O'Leary assured him that many of the diocese's Catholics were English-speaking Irish and that the order's prospects would be "excellent in Chatham."

Kelly was due to return to Toronto in November, 1909. He promised to place the matter before the Basilians' council and hoped for "a favorable decision." In a letter to Bishop Barry, O'Leary described Kelly as "a splendid man" who was convinced everything would "go favourably" after his return to Canada.

Taking over an English college made good sense to the Basilian Fathers. They had recently had

to decline opening a college in Quebec since only four of their fifty teaching priests were French Canadians. As a result Barry was told to expect a delegation from St. Michael's College, the order's chief educational institution in Toronto and coincidentally having the same name as the college in Chatham, to visit soon.

In December, 1909, O'Leary informed Barry that he had spoken to Kelly again and that the latter was still enthusiastic. The Basilians "for the sake of vocations" would almost certainly come to Chatham. Most of their colleges were in cities at that time and they felt "the city never gave priests to the church." Kelly, according to O'Leary, had spoken of the order's preference to establish colleges in "a country district," but had reiterated the stipulation that they could bring only an all-English faculty. "They can give no other," wrote O'Leary, "as they have only English priests at their disposal." Barry had no problem with that.

The College Reopens

The efforts of Barry and the O'Leary brothers to reopen St. Michael's in Chatham fortunately were more successful than Barry's attempt to divide the diocese. Negotiations with the Basilians bore fruit in 1910. At a Sunday service in St. Michael's Pro-Cathedral, Barry announced to his parishioners that the old St. Michael's College would be open in a few weeks' time. The local newspaper reported on August 12th that an official communication had been received from the Basilian Fathers stating their willingness to take charge of the college and to reopen it in time for classes in the coming September. A board of governors was appointed, the members consisting of the priests William Varrily, Edward Murdock, and J. J. O'Keefe; the Mayor of Newcastle Patrick Hennessy; the Mayor of Chatham William James Cassidy; and a prominent Chatham lawyer named Richard Lawlor. There are no records to show that any board meetings actually took place, but from a public point of view it was important that the college have a board.

The first thing the Basilians requested, however, was a change of the college's name from St. Michael's to St. Thomas's. They already had a St. Michael's College, on the campus of the University of Toronto, and they made the reasonable argument that it would be confusing to have two colleges with the same name. Barry did not object. It had been fine to have the college named in honour of the Archangel Michael, leader of God's angels in the fight against Satan, patron saint of warriors. But St. Thomas of Aquino, the great thirteenth-century Italian scholastic, provided an even better model for those studying for the priesthood. The Basilians held Aquinas in high esteem, which says a lot about the aims of their order. Bishop Rogers would certainly have approved. Barry commissioned a statue of St. Thomas Aquinas for the forecourt of the new college.

(Although originally, and even legally under its formal act of incorporation of 1934 and subsequent amendments in 1939 and 1960, the spelling of the college's new name included a possessive apostrophe – St. Thomas' College, St. Thomas' University – from the very beginning on all signs and in all publications the possessive apostrophe was dropped and remains so to the present day. Henceforth we shall follow that common usage.)

A lot needed to be done if the new St. Thomas College was going to open by the middle of September. The old college building had lain vacant for many years. It was still basically sound but would require much cleaning and repairs. The kitchen needed new appliances installed. All the rooms had to be cleaned and painted. The heating system had to be refurbished. Tenders were called and a contractor hired to take care of the plumbing and heating. Construction of a chapel and a dormitory building also began. The college's designated rector, Fr. Nicholas Roche (he would be the college's seventh rector) arrived from Toronto in August and immediately placed advertisements in the local newspapers for a cook and for girls to do housework at the college.

Unavoidable delays forced the postponement of the opening date to October 5, but on that date St. Thomas College became a reality. It was not yet “in perfect working order.” The staff were having a

hard time getting books for the upper grades. Desks which had been ordered earlier in the summer had not yet arrived, and carpenters were busy making temporary ones. Only three “professors” had arrived, although another three were expected “in the near future.” But significantly, after many years of closure, Bishop Rogers's college had reopened.

The editor of the *World*, a Chatham newspaper, reported that St. Thomas was a denominational school for the sons of Roman Catholic parents, established with a noble ideal, “for the purpose, chiefly, of protecting the morals of the lads.” The founders believed that the students of a religious school were “more likely to grow up moral men than those of public schools.” Classes would be conducted in forty-minute periods with one period a week in each class reserved for religious instruction, on which they would be tested on Saturday mornings.

At Roche's urging, the college established two religious societies for the boys. The first was the St. Aloysius Society, for the benefit of the younger boys. Its purpose was “to secure the patronage of the Young Saint and to imitate His Holy Life.” In 1914 it would become the St. Aloysius' Sanctuary Guild, aiming to promote the “proper observance of liturgical ceremonies” and endeavouring “to procure the best possible outward marks of respect in the Sanctuary.” Its director was Fr. William Rogers, the science professor. The second was the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception, open to the older boys. It's objective was “to encourage and foster devotion to the Blessed Virgin,” and with the support of the bishop on November 19, 1913, it would be “aggregated to the Roman ‘Prima Priaria’.” (The two societies would be discontinued when the Basilians left St. Thomas in 1923.)

The *World* editor stated that “this institution of higher learning” was starting off “under exceptionally bright conditions,” and that its opening “may well prove an important day in the history of the town.” He was correct. The real significance of the newspaper account lay not so much in the actual classes to be taught at the college, or even the “morals of the lads,” but the long-lasting and deep community support from which St. Thomas would benefit over the years to come.

The First Calendar

During the first year a calendar for St. Thomas College appeared. It aimed at recruiting students. It outlined the college's four different programmes: a Middle School programme, a High School programme, a Commercial programme, and a Liberal Arts college-level programme. It emphasized the changes that had been made to the old college building, after having sat empty for so many years. The building was “completely renovated,” where “no Expense has been spared to secure the comfort and health of the students.” The “shower baths and toilet room fittings” were “the latest and most up-to-date.” The class rooms were “bright and well-ventilated.” The dormitory was “neat and clean,” with beds and bedding “such as are to be found in the best homes.” The building was “heated throughout with hot water and lighted by electricity.” It was described as a home away from home for the students.

Most important was the denominational character of St. Thomas. The calendar stated clearly that it was a “Catholic School,” “thoroughly Catholic in spirit.” A complete course of instruction in Catholic Christian doctrine was taught in all years, and the best efforts of the staff were “devoted to fore-warning and strengthening their youthful charges against the temptations of life.” St. Thomas was a means for the church “to build up lofty ideals in her children.” Prospective students would have to provide testimonials of good moral character from their pastors, or, if transferring from other colleges, “letters of honorable dismissal.”

The calendar emphasized that the college had its own chapel, altar boys, and choir. Mass was a daily requirement, as were prayers at night. There would be prayers before meals and confession on Friday or Saturday. Religious holidays would be carefully observed, and the annual retreat would be a celebrated event in the school year lasting four or five days, a time for silence, prayer and reflection, conducted each year by priests known for their ability to minister to young men.

The first students, all male, numbered about seventy-five. Most came from families of Irish background, although a few had English or Scottish ancestors. A small number even came from French Acadian families, those who believed it important for their children to be fluent in English as well as French for success in business. The ages of boys even within classes varied widely, with many older boys either back from work or still working part-time.

Student Routine

The Basilian Fathers as experienced educators understood the need to regulate the daily lives of their students at St. Thomas College, keeping them busy mentally and physically in order to keep them out of trouble. The precise daily routine for boarding students was set out as follows:

5.30 a.m. ----- Awakening Bell.
5.50 a.m. ----- Morning Prayer and Meditation.
6.20 a.m. ----- Study.
6.45 a.m. ----- Holy Mass.
7.20 a.m. ----- Breakfast.
7.40 a.m. ----- Recreation.
8.00 a.m. ----- Study.
9.00 a.m. ----- Classes
10:20 a.m. --- Recreation for ten minutes
10:30 a.m. ---- Classes
11.55 a.m. ---- Preparation for Dinner.
12.05 p.m. ---- Dinner.
1.30 p.m. ----- Classes
3. 30 p.m. ---- Recreation
4.45 p.m. ----- Study
6.00 p.m. ----- Supper
6:30 p.m. ----- Recreation
7.30 p.m. ----- Study
8.50 p.m. ----- Recess
9.00 p.m. ----- Night Prayer
9.15 p.m. ----- Bed time

The regimen would change little during the thirteen years that the Basilians ran the college, although there would be some minor amendments. Presumably the staff found starting the day every morning at 5.30 a.m. somewhat onerous, for in 1922 “students will be allowed to sleep in until 6:10,

bed time will be put off five minutes to 9:20, and study hall on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons will be canceled in favour of recreation.”

Student Discipline

Parents were advised that discipline was strict for St. Thomas students. The aim as stated in the calendar was to train the students “in the way of faith, morality, and honour.” The rules were “mild but firm and demand the conduct of every student be that of a young gentleman, and befitting a student of a Catholic college.” Students were expected at all times to be respectful and courteous to the professors and to each other. Attention to religious duties was “strictly required.” All books, pamphlets newspapers, and correspondence were subject to the “supervision and approval of the Rector or Vice-Rector.” Students could receive visitors on Sunday, Wednesday, or Saturday morning, but “under restrictions” and “not during the hours of study.” Permission to visit “the city,” meaning Chatham, would only be granted “for good reason, and upon good behaviour.”

In practice, the priests appear to have tolerated a certain amount of horsing around, but breaches of the rules regularly resulted in “groundings,” whereby students were confined to campus while their better behaved mates were allowed to go into town. Expulsion was the ultimate threat, but the authorities appear to have resorted to it only occasionally. Indeed, discipline at the Basilian St. Thomas does not appear to have been excessive. Over the years, the sources do not indicate any attempts by the students to have them changed, which probably indicates that the paternalistic Basilian Fathers indeed ruled with a fair hand. According to graduates reminiscing about student life in the 1920s, '30s and '40s, the “firm but fair” policy of the Basilians became a lasting legacy of St. Thomas.

St. Thomas's First Year

Even after opening day in October, 1910, new students kept arriving. By the end of the first

week of classes about sixty day-students and fifteen boarding students had enrolled. A week after the college was opened the new desks arrived and were immediately installed. According to published newspaper reports, the college was “gradually taking on a finished appearance.” A month after opening the remaining three members of the teaching staff arrived from Toronto, bringing the college's teaching staff to six “professors.” By the time the first term ended in December, 1910, enrolment had reached ninety-one, including twenty-seven boarders. Enrolment at the start of the second term was a respectable one hundred nine.

Evidence of community support for the new St. Thomas College appeared almost immediately. In 1910 the Ancient Order of Hibernians (an Irish Catholic fraternal organization founded in New York City in 1836) provided the money for two scholarships. The *Chatham Gazette* reported that examinations for them would be held immediately and were open to anyone in the area. Subjects examined would be English, History, Geography, Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry and Latin. The two winners were Thomas Gallivan and Joseph Moran, both from Chatham.

Several donors gave books for the college's library. The O'Leary brothers, Frs. Henry and Louis, donated parts of their personal libraries. Another sizable donation of books came from the estate of Fr. McGuire, a recently deceased priest.

Early in October Fr. Raymond Hawkes, the parish priest in Bartibogue across the Miramichi from Chatham on the road to Bathurst, asked his parishioners for contributions of any kind for the newly-opened college. A few days later he arrived in Chatham on the steamer *Alexandra* bringing “about fifteen barrels of potatoes and about as many of turnips, with some cabbages, beets, carrots, etc.” for the college's boarders and staff. Such parishioners' support for the college became legion. Hawkes himself remained a dedicated supporter throughout the early years. His efforts were so well appreciated that when the Basilians left Chatham in 1923 the bishop would appoint him St. Thomas's new rector.

Before the end of the first year, the statue of St. Thomas Aquinas, the college's new patron saint, arrived and was set up on a plinth in the courtyard and blessed by the bishop.

The Staff at St. Thomas

Fr. Nicholas Roche was an experienced administrator and teacher. He had been rector of St. Michael's College in Toronto for the past five years, and for six years before that rector of St. Thomas College in Houston, Texas, another Basilian College. As rector of St. Thomas in Chatham he would teach classes in Latin, English and Religious Instruction. Like the Christian Brothers before him, Roche was particularly interested in making a commercial programme "central to the curriculum." Indeed, enrolment in the Commercial programme in the early years substantially outnumbered that in the Academic programme.

Assisting Roche was the bursar, Fr. Michael Roach, another Basilian. He had taught in Ontario and in the United States and was described as "a good financial man who served as treasurer in every house to which he was appointed. Like the rector, he helped with instruction, teaching mathematics in the high school classes and supervising the Commercial classes. An outdoorsman, Roach was said to be "handy with rod and gun" and always took his holidays during the hunting season. He "usually brought back a supply of venison" for the college.

Roche had no need to look for MAs or PhDs for his faculty. In the early years of the twentieth century such degrees were few and far between in most Canadian educational institutions. In 1910, a certificate from a Normal School (Teacher's College) sufficed for teaching at the elementary or secondary level and a Bachelor of Arts degree for teaching at the post-secondary level. The rector therefore had a reasonably wide pool of lay teachers to choose from. He brought in J. C. Casey from Montreal, who had previously studied at St. Michael's College in Toronto, and Edgar Kennedy, who had graduated in Political Science from the University of Toronto. Casey would teach Reading in the

Preparatory (Middle School) programme, Stenography in the Commercial programme, and Classics in the Liberal Arts programme. Kennedy would teach Physics to grades nine and ten and Chemistry and “kindred subjects” to grade eleven in the high school. The two men were also described as “excellent singers.”

Kennedy unfortunately fell ill in the second term. He was replaced by Victor Grey, a young man “used to college work” who had been studying for the priesthood in Toronto. He taught science in a special Chemistry Room that was opened for him in the basement of the college building. A third lay teacher, William Kelly, originally from Chatham, was hired to teach English and French. Kelly had graduated from Normal School and had taught elementary school for six years. He had studied for a year at St. Francis Xavier University (StFX) in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, and was at seminary studying for the priesthood when Barry called him back to Chatham to teach at St. Thomas. Unfortunately Kelly also fell seriously ill and died the following year, 1911.

Further Staffing Needs

Nicholas Roche remained rector of St. Thomas for only one year. His task had been to get the college up and running. Barry was pleased, and finding a successor was not a problem. Fr. William Roach, another Basilian and brother of the bursar Michael Roach, arrived in September, 1911, to take over from Roche as the college's eighth rector. He would remain there for eight years.

Barry was concerned, however, that the agreement between himself and the Basilian Fathers was overly vague regarding the order's obligation to provide faculty. The agreement appears to have been that in return for \$2,000 a year from the diocese, the order would provide the services of at least four professors, with lay faculty being paid out of college revenues. In the spring of 1911 at the end of his year as rector, Roche promised Barry he would take immediate steps to clarify the contractual obligations, yet by the end of the fall term in 1911 nothing had been settled.

In a letter to Barry from Toronto dated December 20, 1911, Roche tried to explain the delay. It seems that the order's affairs had been transferred from Toronto to Ottawa for a major review by the Vatican through the services of its Apostolic Delegate to Canada. Until it was completed the Basilians were to maintain the *status quo*. The process, wrote Roche, was less speedy than he had hoped. The Delegate was investigating every Basilian community in Canada, taking statements from every member. Roche informed Barry that there might be “a fiscal decision in a few weeks” but possibly not before June. He assured Barry that there was nothing to worry about. “St. Thomas College,” he wrote, “has enough advocates and friends to continue as we have begun.”

Despite the lack of a formal contractual arrangement the Basilian Fathers attended diligently to St. Thomas's staffing needs throughout the years of their tenure in Chatham. The rapid and welcome, if unexpected, expansion of the college often forced them to make *ad hoc* arrangements in order to find sufficient teachers to maintain the college's four programmes. The order operated several colleges, and the teaching priests were constantly being moved around from one college to another. Furthermore, the lay staff could only be expected to teach for short periods, since most went on for further study or to seminary. The teaching was demanding work. All faculty in each of the programmes, priests as well as laymen, were expected to teach six or more classes a day. In addition to that they were expected to assist with student organizations and athletics.

The initial educational undertaking at St. Thomas was ambitious. There was the three-year Middle School (the “Preparatory”) programme of grades seven, eight and nine; the three-year high school programme of grades ten, eleven and twelve; the three-year Commercial programme that essentially paralleled the high school programme; and the two-year Liberal Arts programme. The latter was what qualified St. Thomas as a “college,” no longer just an “academy.” (Later, somewhat confusingly, a two-year college in New Brunswick would be called a “junior college” to distinguish it from a four-year college, which could be but was not always called a university.) It admitted day

students and boarding students, anyone who had finished grade six in the elementary schools. In 1913, the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph opened St. Joseph's Preparatory School in Chatham for boys from grade one to four. St. Thomas then temporarily extended its elementary or "preparatory" programme backwards to include grades five and six. The extraordinary range of grades at St. Thomas reflected its position as the only English-speaking, Catholic educational institution in the Chatham diocese.

The Arts Programme

The Liberal Arts programme, also called "Senior Matriculation," was intended for students who had graduated from high school. The first year of the programme was established when the college opened in 1910, in which students had to complete the following rigorous curriculum:

- Religious Knowledge: *De Harbe* Reviewed
- Church History: From the Foundation of the Church to the Fall of the Western Empire
- English: readings from Scott's *Ivanhoe* and his *Quentin Durward*; a course of lectures on the short story; critical study of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *Richard II*, and Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and his *Prothalamion*
- A course in Composition and Theme Writing
- French Grammar: translation from English into French and sight translation of modern French prose
- Latin: Horace's *Odes*, Book I, and *Ars Poetica*; Cicero's *Pro Archia Poeta* and *de Senectute*
- Greek: Homer's *Iliad*, Book VI; Xenophon's *Anabasis*; Euripides's *Alcestis*.
- Geometry, Algebra & Trigonometry
- History-- Green's *History of the English People*; Myer's *History of Greece and Rome*
- Natural Sciences:
 - First Term: Cryptoamie Botany. Study of Thallophytes (Bacteria, Desmids. Diatoms, Algae, Moulds, Rusts, Mushrooms, etc.) Bryophytes and Peridophytes. Enemies and Diseases of Economic and Food Plants and their treatment. Methods: Those of the laboratory as far as possible with special attention to microscope work.
 - Second Term: Phanerogamic Botany. Morphology, Physiology and Ecology of Plants. Special attention to tests and experiments to determine structure, composition and function.

The second year of the arts programme was added in the following year. It included the following compulsory courses:

- Religious Knowledge: Christian Dogma; God considered in Himself; God, the Creator of the World; God the Redeemer of Mankind.
- Church History: From the Fall of the Western Empire, 476 A.D. to the end of the 13th century
- English Literature: (a) Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*. (b) From the Restoration to the death of Tennyson (1660-1892). (c) A course of Lectures on the English Novel. (d) Gayley & Young, *Principles and Progress of English Poetry*. (e) Thackeray's *History of Henry Esmond*; Lamb's *Essays of Elia*. Outside Reading: Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian*; Meredith's *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*.
- French Grammar: translation from English into French, and sight translation from French into English.
- French Literature: selections from Corneille, Racine, Bruner, Molière, Boileau, Sainte-Beuve.
- Latin: Livy's *History of Rome*, Book IX; Cicero's *Pro Marcello* and *Pro Murena*; Horace's *Odes*, II, III and IV.
- History: Green's *History of the English People*, continued; Myer's *History of Greece and Rome*, continued.
- Mathematics: Analytic Geometry and Elementary Calculus
- Physics: Elementary Mechanics, Sound, and Heat.
- Zoology: Comparative Anatomy.

According to the calendar for 1912-1913, it was intended that the third and fourth years of the arts programme would be introduced in 1913 and 1914. In fact, although similar statements appeared in the next few calendars, the Basilians never had the resources to add the last two years of the programme. In 1916, however, they did offer “a complete course in Philosophy and History of Philosophy” for “special students,” meaning those going on to seminary.

The Commercial Programme

St. Thomas's new rector, Fr. William Roach, was as keen to enhance the Commercial programme as his predecessor had been. He had been educated at the Basilian St. Michael's College in Toronto. After his ordination in 1901, he taught at Assumption College, a Catholic high school in Windsor, Ontario (founded by the Basilians in 1870) and then completed graduate work at the Catholic University of America (CUA) in Washington, DC, USA. He was joined at St. Thomas by Fr. Michael Pickett, former head of the Commercial department of St. Michael's College in Toronto. Roach appointed Pickett to be head of the Commercial programme and “Second Counselor of the College.”

The two arranged that students graduating from St. Thomas's Commercial programme would be awarded diplomas from “one of the leading Business Colleges in Toronto.” Pickett proved to be a popular teacher with, according to a former student, a “booming voice and a rough exterior, a man’s priest, inspiring confidence and drawing to him for counsel and encouragement, students, soldiers and parishioners.”

The justification for the Basilians' commercial interests was articulated in the St. Thomas College calendar for 1911, along with an interesting paternalistic warning:

The days are gone when the able but illiterate man rises from the ranks. Now even to maintain a place in the ranks, one needs a technical education. Business has, within a comparatively few years, assumed a scientific aspect. The object of the Commercial Course is to train men for a business career. To obtain the highest results in the course and in life a liberal education is a necessity. For this reason the full Academic or High School course is recommended in preparation, though only entrance standing is demanded. The parents of Catholic boys should carefully consider the danger of sending their sons to a business college where they must live away from home. At St. Thomas the course is equal to that of any business school, the expenses are no greater, and the boy is under religious influence and Catholic home care. Those who have shown themselves capable try the examination set by a leading business college of Toronto and on passing receive their coveted Diploma. The fee for this examination is two dollars.

The Commercial programme had three grades or “departments”: Junior, Intermediate and Senior. The standard for a promotion from one department to the next was a grade average of 75%. A student who failed to reach the standard had to repeat the year. Arithmetic was included in each of the departments.

Students in the Junior department took:

- Percentage, Profit and Loss, Trade Discounts, Commissions and Brokerage, Custom House Business, Insurance, Marine Insurance, Taxes, “and Misc.”
- Bookkeeping: Practice in Business Forms, Study of Accounts, Journalising, Posting, Trial Balance Sheet, and general use of Journal, Day Book and Ledger.
- Office work: Junior Business Practice -- an actual Flour & Feed and Boot & Shoe Business
- Skills: Shorthand and Typewriting, Practical Spelling, Correspondence, Penmanship, Composition and Practical English

In the Intermediate department:

- Accurate Interest, Compound Interest, True and Bank Discount, Partial Payments, and Equation and Averaging of Accounts.
- Office work: an actual Wholesale Grocery Business

-Skills: Practical Spelling, Correspondence, Penmanship, Composition and Practical English

And in the Senior department:

-Stock Exchange, Domestic and Foreign Exchange, Ratio, Partnerships, Annuities, Sinking Funds, Ground Rents, Life Insurance, Measurements, Commercial Law.

-Office work: Shipment and Merchandise Companies.

-General Business Practices: Exercises in various Forms, Statements, Balance Sheets, etc., and a special course in Banking.

-Skills: Shorthand and Typewriting, Practical Spelling, Correspondence, Penmanship, Composition and Practical English.

In 1912, thirty students were enrolled in the full Commercial programme. Seven received diplomas from the Dominion Business College of Toronto at the end of that year, nineteen more a year later. In 1913, ten were taking a special course in stenography. The Commercial programme would remain a major part of St. Thomas's curriculum throughout the 1920s, even after the Basilians left.

Rapid Growth of St. Thomas College

When William Roach took up his responsibilities as St. Thomas's eighth rector in September 1911, the college's faculty had already been increased to ten, including three priests. The number of courses especially in the new arts programme had been expanded. Two new teachers had been added to Preparatory: E. A. Barry, who was also Prefect of Discipline for the college and who would stay for three years, and G. Savoy teaching French and History.

Student enrolment was high, although on opening day in 1911 some of the older students were late registering, the result of "the busy time during Exhibition." The agricultural exhibition, which was held in the early autumn, had always been a major event on the Miramichi. Help was needed to put up tents and run the various attractions and events. It was an opportunity to earn a few dollars, so missing classes for a few days at the beginning of the academic year was allowed. Student numbers continued to increase the following year, 1912, when sixty boarding students and eighty day students enrolled

In light of what the future held for St. Thomas, it is worth noting that the idea of affiliation with

the University of New Brunswick was also raised that year. In the August 28, 1912, issue of the *Gazette* we find the remark that “several attempts have been made to have St. Thomas affiliated with UNB, but no final agreement has yet been reached.” Exactly what “affiliation” meant remained vague, and the idea remained moot for a long time. It would be half a century before the issue became real.

Judge William Wilkinson, a leading Protestant in Chatham and a member of the board of governors of Kings College in Windsor, Nova Scotia, came to address St. Thomas students in December 1912 and presented two sets of books as prizes for students with the highest marks. Wilkinson was a strong supporter of education in the region. He had been the first Inspector of Schools for Northumberland, Gloucester, and Restigouche counties in 1856 and a personal friend of Bishop Rogers. Unfortunately but significantly, some of Chatham's non-Catholics disapproved of Wilkinson's attentions to the education of Catholics, which indicates some of the underlying religious and political problems of the time.

In the winter of 1913 Barry lost the services of a much valued supporter at the college when his vicar-general, Henry O'Leary, was appointed Bishop of Charlottetown. To ameliorate the loss, Barry arranged the promotion O'Leary's brother, Louis, from Chancellor to Auxiliary Bishop of the Chatham diocese. Both O'Learys, as we have seen, were among St. Thomas most enthusiastic supporters.

Enrolment at the college continued to climb. When classes opened in September 1913 student numbers had increased to the point where the college had to take over for use as a study hall the old wooden Pro-Cathedral (the new stone cathedral would not be finished until 1921). When, at the start of the second term, even more students arrived, the staff had trouble finding room for them all. The old chapel was enlarged by a newly-built adjoining room. Eighty boarding students and eighty day-students were now enrolled at St. Thomas and every available square foot was occupied. Additional faculty arrived, including Fr. Joseph Finnigan, who had taught previously at St. Basil's College in Texas, at St. Michael's College in Toronto, and at Assumption College, a Catholic high school in Windsor, Ontario.

He taught History and Classics and apparently was considered “an excellent Latin Teacher.” He was also St. Thomas's “Treasurer and First Counselor.” William Moore, “a first class superior teacher,” was added to Preparatory in the second term. And the rector undertook plans for the “installation of a fully equipped physical plant and chemical laboratory,” designed partly to enable the new professor of science, Fr. William Rogers from Assumption College, “to develop his new ideas in flash-light photography.” Rogers arrived in 1914 and for the next five years taught not only science but mathematics at all levels. (He was later awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Western Ontario.)

Other new faculty members appeared in 1914. Fr. Vincent Reath was assigned to teach History and Religious Knowledge in both the high school and the arts programmes; he introduced a new course, Telegraphy, in the Commercial Department. He was interested in athletics “especially baseball” and would remain at St. Thomas until 1919, coaching several student teams. Leo Troy, who had previously completed his studies at St. Thomas, arrived to teach history and science. A certain S. Beaubien was hired to teach French, and Fr. Joseph Trudell was appointed “Professor of Gregorian Chant.” The practice of bringing in new young teachers every year continued throughout the Basilians' tenure at St. Thomas. The young men usually went on to study elsewhere, many to seminary to complete studies for the priesthood.

Effects of World War I

Despite the outbreak of World War I, the number of faculty at St. Thomas at first continued to rise. Denman Coyne arrived in the fall of 1915 as “Professor of Elocution and Pianoforte” and proceeded to organize a Literary and Dramatic Society, several musical concerts, and various other organizations for the students. Two other lay teachers, Henry McHenry and James Fay, also arrived in 1915. They came from St. Laurent College in Montreal, each with considerable teaching experience.

They taught in the Preparatory and High School programmes and like Coyne also became much involved in student activities at St. Thomas.

As the Great War in Europe dragged on, however, it affected several faculty as well as many older students. In 1915 Pickett, whom the rector in 1911 had seconded from St. Michael's in Toronto to head and develop the Commercial programme, left to join the military overseas as a chaplain. (He would return to St. Thomas in 1919 and continue to teach there until 1923 when he would leave Chatham with the other Basilians.) During the 1915-1916 school year, several students signed up to join the war effort with the 132 Overseas Battalion from Northumberland County. On June 6, 1916, the college faculty celebrated them at a special dinner, the lead speaker pointing out that "St. Thomas boys have not been wanting in this hour of trial. Some are found on the Honor Roll of every contingent that has left the Maritimes for overseas." By then a total of fifty-four former St. Thomas students had enlisted, of whom five had already been killed in action. A Cadet Corps was formed at the college to encourage students to enlist.

Throughout the war years the military made constant requests for chaplains. Several Basilian teacher-priests volunteered, including one P. Costello, who had arrived only a year before in 1916 to teach Classics, French and Religious Knowledge. He was "a great favorite with the boys," and was given a "farewell entertainment" by the Literary society before he left. They escorted him to the train and gave him "a lusty send off." Other faculty members going off to war included James Fay, teaching at St. Thomas since 1915, who left in 1917 to join the American Flying Corps and was replaced by A. D. Tracy, who had been teaching at Notre Dame College in Montreal. Leo Troy, the history and science teacher, also left to join the Canadian Army. In spite of wartime deprivations, student enrolment at St. Thomas College continued to grow, which required Rector William Roach to find ever more faculty members.

In May, 1916, the Catholic publication the *New Freeman* of Saint John contained the following

laudatory review of the progress of St. Thomas College during the six years since its founding:

Having in view the needs of the English-speaking Catholics of the North Shore, [Bishop Barry] invited the Basilian Fathers to open a college in Chatham and already the college has grown beyond the expectations of its founder.

The college is situated on an elevation, overlooking the town of Chatham and commanding a fine view of the beautiful Miramichi river for miles of its course. It is one of a cluster of educational, religious and charitable buildings which cannot be equaled in the Maritime Provinces.

St. Thomas College is a boarding and day school with four Departments – Preparatory, Commercial, High School and College. The Commercial School affords thorough and up-to-date instruction in bookkeeping, stenography, typewriting and telegraphy. In the High School the students are prepared for the University and Normal School, and the course of instruction is arranged to correspond with the work required by the Provincial Board of Education. With the exception of the Arts or College course, which is always a slow growth in the first years, all these departments have had large classes and the prospects for steady increase in the future are very bright.

In the beginning the students were nearly all from Chatham diocese, but the field of recruitment has steadily widened until it includes [all] the Maritime Provinces [as well as] Quebec. In particular, the number of students from the diocese of St. John has greatly increased. During the present year more than one hundred and fifty students have been enrolled.

The College grounds are very large including two fine baseball and football fields, tennis courts, handball alleys, and one of the finest skating rinks in any Canadian College. Athletes are encouraged under the careful supervision of the College authorities, who believe in the good old principle, *mens sana in corpore sano* [a healthy body makes for a healthy mind].

The following fall, in September, 1916, no doubt partly as a result of the report itself and its circulation in Saint John, enrolment broke “all previous records” at one-hundred-eighty-one students.

Turnover of St. Thomas's teaching staff increased. Fr. Sheridan, who had replaced Pickett as head of the Commercial Department in 1915 when the former left to join the war effort, was himself replaced in 1916 by a Fr. Finnegan. Finnegan, in turn, was replaced by Fr. Émile Plourde, who had been teaching in Detroit, had supervised athletics at several colleges, and was himself said to be an “outstanding athlete.” More young teachers were added to replace those that left, although most of them would move on to further studies after a year or so of teaching. Among those added to the teaching staff at St. Thomas in 1917-18 were F. A. McGrand from Gagetown, who would later be appointed to the Canadian Senate, and James Michael Hill. (Hill would be ordained in 1923 and would become rector of St. Thomas 1927; later still, in 1946, he would be appointed Bishop of Victoria,

British Columbia.)

The 1918-19 college year got off to a bad start in September because of the Spanish Flu, the epidemic that killed many around the world. It was not as severe in New Brunswick as in many other places, although many did fall ill, some fatally so, which forced the health authorities to close many schools. St. Thomas was permitted to continue classes for boarding students, but day students were not allowed to attend classes.

College Facilities

We are fortunate that Fr. Émile Plourde, who remained at St. Thomas until 1919, in July 1917 sent a report about the college to the Basilian superior in Toronto. The report gives a detailed description of the forty-year-old, four-storey wooden college building, which as we saw earlier had replaced the previous college building that had burnt in 1878. It had a stone basement. The first floor contained four classrooms, “the measurements of which are about 12 x 16, 16 x 24, 16 x 40 and 24 x 30,” three of which were “fairly well lighted.” The second floor held two more classrooms, “each about 16 x 24 and well lighted.” A large study hall was “airy and well lighted,” two stories high, and held 150 students. The building had its own chapel and two large dormitories, which were “large and roomy” but only one of which was “very well ventilated.” (Two years later, in 1919, the replacement building would itself burn down to the ground.) Nearby, the bishop’s old residence, a small building only one and a half stories high, was used as quarters for the servants. It was heated by two coal stoves which were “a constant source of reasonable complaint.” The college boasted some improvements to its facilities in order to accommodate the ever-increasing enrolment. A “beautiful new refectory” had been constructed in the basement of the main building. In the spring of 1917, a “large airy dormitory” had been constructed and the study hall renovated.

Extra-Curricular Activities and Community Support

Over the generations, from 1910 (and even before) until 1964 when St. Thomas would move to Fredericton, the people of Chatham and surrounding areas, and not just Catholics, adopted the college as their own. It helps to explain the huge uproar that the removal would cause, as we shall examine in later chapters. The public was always eager to hear news about the college. One of the local newspapers, the *Chatham Gazette*, became known as the college paper. Its editor was a strong supporter of St. Thomas and for many years ran a weekly column on what was going on there. For, in spite of the restrictions that St. Thomas's masters had imposed at the start, they nevertheless understood the need to provide sporting events, lectures, concerts, and excursions, not only for their charges as outlets for youthful enthusiasm but particularly as a way to repay the community for its support.

A tradition of public lectures given by invited guests, for example, began in the first year of the college's existence. Fr. Stanislaus Doucet, as we saw a former French professor and music instructor at St. Michael's in the 1860's and more recently Vicar-General for the diocese in the 1890s, gave a demonstration of a "Planetarium" he had devised. It was reported to have been "of great assistance in understanding the movements, positions, revolutions, sizes and rates of acceleration of those heavenly bodies."

Although their studies kept students occupied for much of the time, a whole series of societies and clubs provided extra-curricular activities. Some were designed to strengthen the students' religious faith, others to build on the skills they were learning in the classrooms, yet others to provide opportunities for involvement in music and, especially, sports. Each society had a Director who was usually a faculty member, sometimes a senior student. The College Glee Club and the College Choir, for example, were founded at the very start of the college in 1910. J. C. Casey, a lay member of the faculty and himself an excellent singer, originally directed both groups. The Glee Club gave monthly concerts for students, faculty and guests. The Choir was said to be for those students who showed an

“aptitude for singing the Gregorian Chant.” They took part in high mass on Sundays and festivals and sang liturgical music for services in the college chapel as well as English hymns at morning mass in the chapel. The chapel, described as small but convenient and “tastefully painted and stenciled,” was consecrated on December 4, 1910, when the bishop celebrated the first high mass and Casey, assisted by Kennedy and Kelly, led the student choir. Coyne, who would become the choir's director after 1915, served as the chapel organist. Many local residents attended the service, squeezing into the little chapel along with faculty and students. Barry and a number of the diocesan priests attended the combined Choir and Glee Club's first public concert on December 23. Barry used the occasion to thank the Basilians for “their sacrifice in coming to Chatham, and opening a college under such trying conditions.” In March 1911 the Glee Club put on the college's first St. Patrick's Concert, reportedly well attended by the public. .

Literary Societies

Other extra-curricular activities provided further instruction and entertainment for the public. The Aquinas Academy was formed in 1911, membership open to students in the arts programme. The object of the society was initially to encourage essay writing and later elocution and public speaking. Fr. Rogers served as its president. The St. Louis Library Association was also formed in 1911, with Fr. Louis O'Leary, Chancellor of the diocese, as its Honorary President. The Association's stated purpose was “the encouragement of composition,” and the following year it was given responsibility for the care of the library. Then the St. Thomas Literary Society was formed in 1911 to provide “debates, musicals and short entertainments.” In 1914 its membership was expanded to include students in the High School programme. In 1915, its Director, Denman Coyne, reorganised it into two separate societies: the Senior Society, open to the students of the arts programme and the high school and officially named the St. Thomas Aquinas Literary Society; and the St. Michael's Literary Society, open

to members of the Commercial and Preparatory courses. Medals and a “handsome pennant” were prepared for competitions between the two Literary Societies. Prizes went to the Society attaining the “highest proficiency in all branches, which includes callisthenics, oratory and dramatics.” In October, 1916, a new gymnasium room was opened for the “elocution class” to hold “regular drills in dumb-bells, Indian clubs, wands, fencing, etc.” The exercises were said to be “necessary for the proper poise in elocution and oratory.”

The Opera House and the Societies' New Rooms

The Opera House in Chatham, built in 1908 on the site of the old St. Patrick’s Hall on Wellington Street, was the town's stage for musical and dramatic presentations and would remain so until 1953. It was the site of the annual St. Patrick’s Concerts, which over the years included many St. Thomas students. It was also the site of the college's concerts, plays and even graduation ceremonies.

The students' stage presentations at the Opera House included a drama entitled “The Cross of St. John” in 1911 and “The Yellow Robe” in 1912. Later that year the Senior Literary Society staged for the public a debate: “Resolved: that Capital Punishment should be abolished.” In 1913, the literary societies put on an “Entertainment” in honour of the anniversary of Bishop Barry's consecration and a play, “The Malediction.” A Parliamentary Society was also organized that year and mounted debates between the Roundheads and the Cavaliers. In 1915, the various student societies organized a special Patriotic Concert.

1916 and 1917 proved to be busy years for the Societies. Community support remained high, and friends of the college continued to help with gifts and other contributions. Increasing student numbers meant that the societies needed more room for their meetings. In February, 1916, they took over and cleaned up three unused rooms in the old college building. The new “Societies' Rooms” were fitted with electric fixtures and some new furniture “made of fumed oak and upholstered in Spanish

leather” along with bookcases, pictures and books. It cost the college nothing since everything was donated by “friends of the college,” and student members did all the work. One of the friends was Fr. Cormier of Douglastown, who contributed a working and much prized player-piano.

A month later the Societies celebrated their new rooms with a “Shakespearean Night.” They presented scenes “as in the Elizabethan Period” from *Julius Caesar*, the *Merchant of Venice*, and *Richard III*. It was followed by a musical concert performed by five students. The formal opening apparently was a great success with “a large and enthusiastic audience.” Barry, assisted by Louis O’Leary, his Auxiliary Bishop since 1914, blessed the Societies' new home.

In June 1916 the Senior Society successfully staged a complete rendition of *Julius Caesar* in the Opera House. That same year the Society sponsored a series of ten lectures on various topics, including one on Rome given by Bishop Louis O’Leary. In December they put on a minstrel show in the Opera House. They also provided turkey dinners during the holiday season for a number of needy families. On St. Patrick’s Day in 1917 the Senior Society organized another “Minstrel and Vaudeville” show at the Opera House, presenting a concert of songs, jokes and ballads. In June under Coyne's direction it staged the play *My Friend from India*. The public was enchanted. Community support for the college remained high.

Memorials

In 1917 the Societies decided to create a memorial to former St. Thomas students who had died in the war overseas. They cleaned up the area in front of the old college building and planted flowers, shrubs and trees. Judge Wilkinson presented the Society with a flag-pole, said to be the largest one-piece flag-pole in the province. Students, faculty and friends gave money for a marble slab. The official opening of this memorial plot took place on June 3, 1917, before classes ended, marking the first celebration of Memorial Day on campus. Soldiers from the Manitoba Regiment stationed in Newcastle

attended, as well as a detachment from the 12th Field Battery and a military band. They arrived in Chatham by steamboat, where they were met by the college's Cadet Corps. They formed up and marched through the town to the cathedral for mass.

The rector, Fr. William Roach, was the celebrant, assisted by Frs. Costello and Savoy. Bishop Barry delivered a “scholarly and beautiful” eulogy on the lives of former students who had served overseas. The college choir provided the music, and a flag was raised on the new pole at the memorial plot. Later, at an impressive ceremony in the college's study hall, the Roll of Honour of fifty-four names was read out and an equal number of rifles, one for each former St. Thomas student serving in the military since 1910, were placed in a row across the centre of the stage, “enlarged for the occasion.” The names of five soldiers who had been killed were read out and silence was maintained for ten seconds. Their pictures, veiled in “National and College Colours” and placed at the front of the hall, were uncovered. Flowers from relatives, friends and students covered the stage.

A second Memorial Day ceremony occurred a year later in June, 1918. The men of the Manitoba Regiment with the help of the students graded and re-sodded the Memorial Plot. A military band led the college cadet corps and the soldiers of the Manitoba Regiment in a parade through the town. The roll-call of servicemen had risen to seventy-seven, including four faculty members, and the number of those killed was now listed as eight. The Knights of Columbus of Bathurst donated a large service flag. Not to be outdone, their fellow Knights of Chatham donated an even larger Union Jack, said to be the largest flag in the province. They were both hoisted on Judge Wilkinson's towering flag pole.

Five months later, on Armistice Day, November 11th, 1918, a massive parade in Chatham celebrated the war's end. Members of the St. Thomas Literary Society took a prominent part. A month later, the Governor-General of Canada, the Duke of Devonshire, visited Chatham and laid a wreath at St. Thomas's war memorial, the first of many he would lay that year across the country. He commented

that he was “surprised at so young a college having so many at the front.”

Earlier that year, the Literary Society designated Fr. Cormier, dedicated friend of the college and its students (and donor of the prized player-piano), their Honorary Vice-President. They also made Judge Wilkinson, donor of the outsized flag-pole, an Honorary Member. The Judge, now ninety-two years old, attended a ceremony and dinner and entertained the students with stories of his early life in England and on the Miramichi.

Sports

Of all St. Thomas's extra-curricular activities, sports topped the list throughout the Basilian Fathers' thirteen-year tenure. The Chatham *Gazette*, or at least its editor, was a particular admirer of the college's sports and vigorously advertised all competitions. The first calendar had emphasized the “healthful recreation” that the college offered, with ample room for football and baseball and other outdoor sports. Already during the first week of the college's opening, the older students (the “Roomers”) had already challenged the younger ones (the “Dormitories”) to rough pick-up games. In the second week the rector, Fr. Nicholas Roche, had summoned the students to the study hall in order to form a St. Thomas Athletic Association. The rector himself would serve as Honorary President of the association while his brother, Fr. Thomas Roche, served as Acting President. N. Burns, a lay member of the faculty, was appointed Secretary-Treasurer, and William Kelly, another lay teacher, General Manager. The students elected their own executive committee. The next order of business was to choose the college colours. They chose green and gold, colours that remain today.

The Basilian Fathers as a matter of principle put a high value on sports in their schools. But it was those faculty members who had themselves been young athletes who would become the sustaining force behind sports at St. Thomas. Each team had a different faculty member as manager, which necessarily involved practically the entire teaching staff. Faculty often coached as well as managed.

The rector over time managed variously the senior football team, the tennis club, and the hockey club. Pickett, the director of the Commercial Department, in one year was manager of the football team, the hockey team, and the baseball team.

The Chatham *Gazette* reported enthusiastically on St. Thomas's sports. In the fall of 1910 already an article about the football team had appeared, entitled "Footballists on the Move." House leagues had been set up and football practice had begun following the recently established rules that distinguished the game from rugby football. That first year Joe Moran was captain. Although one player was recovering from a dislocated shoulder, the team bristled with confidence. It issued challenges to a match with a Chatham home team as well as the football team at UNB in Fredericton. The *Gazette's* editor urged the town's businesses to support a team to take up the college's challenge. One of the best footballers "that ever came from UNB," he wrote, was said to be available in town. If employers would give some of their workers an hour or two a week to practice, the town could have "a cracking fine team." Future competition could extend beyond football to basketball and hockey, which would provide enjoyment to the town and enhance "the good will and friendly spirit" between town and college. Evidence, if any were needed, of the tremendous support that St. Thomas from its very beginning elicited from the Miramichi community.

In response to the *Gazette's* challenge the town did put a football team together and by the end of October had already played two matches against the St. Thomas team. The lighter-weight scholars unfortunately were crushed by the heavier townies, but spirits were not dampened. The players' enthusiasm made up for their lack of skill. There were even enough students to form a junior football team.

At the start of St. Thomas's third year, in September 1912, Fred Nealy arrived from St. Dunstan's College in Charlottetown to teach in the Preparatory programme. He had been captain of the football team at St. Dunstan's. That year he both managed and played on the St. Thomas football team.

His expertise, unfortunately, did not translate into victories for the team. In September, he took the team to Charlottetown for a match against his alma mater, St. Dunstan's, which they lost. Later that fall the team traveled to Fredericton to play UNB, where they were trounced 24-3. Nealy also played on the hockey team that winter. In spite of his record, everyone was disappointed when he left St. Thomas at the end of the year for further study.

A college baseball team had also formed in the spring of the first year and had also produced a Chatham town baseball team in response. Over the next few years, the St. Thomas team would take on town teams in Douglastown, Newcastle, Loggieville and Bathurst. (Aside: according to an entry in the college's athletics ledger, a baseball bat at that time cost two dollars.)

A "Rooter's Club" was up and running by November of the first year, inventing and practicing college cheers. An example appeared in a newspaper report of a college concert in January 1911:

Hi hi choik!
Hi hi choik!
Halumun, talumun gee!
Riggidy, raggady, S.T.C.!
Riggidy, raggady, S.T.C.!
Gee hee, gee ho!
Gee hee, ha ha!
St. Thomas, St. Thomas!
Rah, Rah, Rah!

The first college team sweaters arrived also in January, 1911. The St. Thomas monogram in green and gold letters stood out against a green and purple background.

The bowling alley, which had two "box alleys," was ready for use during that first winter, providing some opportunity for indoor winter sports. Plans were made to construct a covered handball alley and basketball court on church property in a small field nearby. Thus, a College Handball Club took shape in 1911, and following the construction of an outdoor tennis court in 1912, a Tennis Club. By 1915, St. Thomas would have a soccer as well as a rugby team. At the start of term in 1916 a punching bag was donated to the gym, and by November boxing had become a popular pastime,

leading to “some clever exhibitions of the manly art.”

An Annual Field Day from 1915 on saw athletic competitions in all sports at Senior, Intermediate, and Junior levels. The Knights of Columbus donated money for a gold medal for the top Senior athlete each year, while the Assumption Society funded a gold medal for the Intermediate champion. The Junior champion was awarded “a valuable prize.”

Hockey

The most important sport, of course, was hockey, both from the point of view of student competition and of public attendance. By opening day the college had graded and prepared a usable outdoor rink. There were enough good players among St. Thomas students to form two evenly matched teams. At the time a full team had a complement of only eight players (seven plus a spare): Goal, Rover, Centre, Left Wing, Right Wing, Point, and Cover Point. It made for exhausting performances for individual players.

The first winter, in January 1911, Victor Gray, a lay teacher and the new hockey manager, gave the players a stirring motivational talk. He told them how the St. Michael’s College team in Toronto had advanced to the junior world championships. He entered the St. Thomas team in the North Shore League and even drew up a schedule of games.

Hockey at St. Thomas was so popular that, in November 1912, the college laid the foundation for a new rink. Originally designed with a small ice surface forty by ninety-eight feet, it was expanded during construction to seventy by one hundred seventy feet, nearly regulation size. The rink was opened in time for the new term on January 15, 1913, and the next day a team from Commercial faced off against one from Arts. It was a wild and unpredictable affair, according to reports, in which Arts lost. Some of the boys, it appeared, had never used hockey sticks before.

In January 1914 Fr. Louis O’Leary (shortly to become Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese)

presented a cup to the Athletic Association for a competition in the house hockey league, which excluded members of the senior team. It was designed to stir up “wholesome rivalry” among the other students, although the winners would likely “win the coveted honour of a position on the College Senior Hockey Team.” In a modern twist, that same year the “Smokers” challenged the “Non-Smokers” to a game. The Non-Smokers won and claimed it “proved conclusively that it is impossible to smoke and play hockey.”

The rink actually became a source of revenue for the college. It was opened to the public for free skating on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday Evenings. On Wednesday nights a hired Citizen’s Band even provided music.

By the college's third year the Senior team was playing in the North Shore Intermediate League. The first game in the new rink took place in February 1913 to a packed and enthusiastic crowd, who watched “some fast hockey.” Joe Curry, a well known Chatham athlete, was coaching the college team. Despite the fact that the St. Thomas team was leading the league, they lost the game, which was apparently “marred by much rough playing.” The Rooters Club and the Glee Club, under the direction of F.P. Carroll, a member of faculty, did their best and must have boosted morale since the team went on to win the League championship in April. The Executive of the North Shore Hockey League organized a banquet for the team and presented them with the Lennan Cup.

St. Thomas repeated its League championship three years later, in 1916. The following year the St. Thomas hockey team traveled to Fredericton twice, beating the UNB team both times. The second match, held in March, 1917, was particularly fast and closely fought. St. Thomas scored the winning goal in the last minute of play, and the team went on to win the North Shore Championship again that year, and would do so again in 1918.

These young, enthusiastic and talented sportsmen in their green-and-gold outfits, along with all the rousing dramatic and choral performances, not to mention the solemn religious celebrations, would

the college tightly around the hearts of the people of the Miramichi. They stamped upon St. Thomas a tradition of reaching out into the community that lasted throughout the first century of its existence and beyond.

Financial Problems

Yet despite St. Thomas's apparent success in its first few years, as demonstrated by its expanding enrolment and flourishing athletic and other activities, financial and political problems lurked beneath the surface.

Concerns about the financial status of St. Thomas began the day the college opened. The Chatham diocese was not wealthy. Finding the money to operate the college and pay the clerical and lay teachers was a constant worry for Bishop Barry. The Basilians understood this and made few demands in the early years. By 1916, however, they too were beginning to be worried. At the start of term in September, 1916, Fr. Plourde, director of Commercial and bursar of the college, wrote a pessimistic letter to the Very Reverent Fr. Forster at Assumption College in Chatham, Ontario, expressing his concerns that the diocese was not meeting the college's expenses. According to Plourde, the debts for the academic year 1915-1916 were \$2,324.33. By July 1, only \$1,475.43 had been collected. Although \$289.64 had come in since then, they were still left with a debt of \$559.26 from the previous year. Now at the start of term they had only \$1,765.07 to pay salaries and other expenses for the year. The Auxiliary Bishop Louis O'Leary had assured him the outstanding debts would soon be paid and so could be considered assets rather than liabilities. The college, O'Leary had declared, was solvent.

Plourde was not so sure. One could not, he wrote, pay the cook, the maids, or the servants, or buy things, with uncollected debts. It was impossible to "make the house pay for itself" on the receipts of each year. The rector had agreed with him that the cost of living was simply too high. Liabilities had

to be met, the faculty had to be paid. The diocese had to pay more. Evidently, it was the nonchalance of Barry's staff about finances that most bothered Plourde. He expressed his doubts that the diocese would be able to meet its contract with the order. He, Plourde, had pointed out to the bishop that with tuition fees of only \$150 a year for boarding students and \$20 for day students, without the diocese's \$2,000 the college could not operate. And Barry had informed him that he doubted the diocese would be able to afford the \$2,000 every year. Plourde begged Forster to come to Chatham to straighten things out with the bishop. He even offered personally to pay his train fare.

It is not clear whether or not Forster came, but within four months, in January 1920, the ailing Barry died. The diocese's new bishop, Patrice Chiasson, was an Acadian and less concerned than his predecessor for the well-being of English-speaking St. Thomas. The financial situation worsened, until as a result in 1923 the Basilians decided to leave Chatham.

The college's financial difficulties of course in the large scheme of things were the result of the poverty of Northern New Brunswick. Tuition was not especially high, yet many students came from families who could only afford to pay in installments and the rector had not the heart to turn them down. One mother, whose son hoped to become a priest, had written the following plaintive letter to the bursar in 1916 in response to a bill from the college :

Received an account from you last night which I cannot pay at present. The Bishop promised to pay half of the fee when Willie first went there. Only for that I would have sent him somewhere else, for I could not afford to pay it all. I paid half every year but I still owe six dollars and twenty-five cents(\$6.25) which I will pay when Willie is working in the summer-time. The seminary's twenty-five dollars is what the Bishop promised to pay and which I cannot pay. P.S. God knows I have hard times enough to get through the winter with three or four children and no way to get money.

Church Politics

It was not only financial problems, however, that concerned the Basilians. Political issues also threatened St. Thomas's continued existence. One such issue concerned the Eudist Fathers. The Eudist

Fathers as we saw earlier opened their Collège du Sacré Coeur in Caraquet in 1899. It became popular with the local francophone Catholics. Its remote location was not a concern to the Basilians in 1910 when they arrived in Chatham. In 1914, however, Sacré Coeur was destroyed by fire, and although the local inhabitants of Caraquet wished to see it rebuilt there, the Eudist Fathers considered Bathurst a more desirable location and requested permission to rebuild there. Barry had to make a difficult decision.

In a letter to Bishop Barry written in February 1916, St. Thomas's rector expressed his deep concerns. He felt that such a move would have a seriously negative effect on St. Thomas by cutting off recruitment from what he considered "the best territory in the Diocese of Chatham." Many of St. Thomas's boarding students came from the northern part of the diocese. If another college were to open in Bathurst, between Chatham and the north, he was sure that "many of those students would not pass by a College in Bathurst to attend St. Thomas College." He warned the bishop that if the move were allowed, it would adversely affect the conditions under which the Basilians had agreed to come to Chatham. Those conditions had been agreed upon verbally, even if not in writing.

The head of the Basilian order in Toronto, Fr. Nicholas Roach, happened to be yet another brother of the rector, William Roach. When the former was informed about the matter he too wrote to Barry objecting to the relocation of the Eudists' college in Bathurst, for the same reasons. Like his brother, he argued that it would surely cut St. Thomas off from the best territory in the diocese for recruiting boarding students. He pointed out that there was little territory in the southern part of the diocese from which to draw students. "I am convinced," he wrote,

that St. Thomas College cannot survive the removal of the Collège du Sacré-Coeur to Bathurst, nor do I think its reopening would have been considered for a moment if there had been a College in Bathurst at that date.

He was now "respectfully" protesting the proposal.

Barry sided with the Roaches. Later that same month, in February 1916, he contacted the rector

of St. Patrick's School in Montreal, the headquarters of the Eudists, to inform them that he would prefer they rebuild in Caraquet since he felt Bathurst was "too far from the center of our Acadian population and too near Chatham," where St. Thomas was doing good work under the Basilians. He suggested that if the Eudists did not wish to rebuild in Caraquet, another religious community of priests or brothers might be willing to re-establish a college there. He received no reply, and the problem remained unsolved. He sought the advice of his priests.

The elderly Stanislaus Doucet, who had taught at the college (then St. Michael's) in the years before 1880, expressed his view that the Eudist Fathers should be allowed to rebuild wherever they wished since "for 15 years they have served the Diocese well." He supported their plan to move to Bathurst. If St. Thomas needed protecting, he recommended that a condition of the Eudists' removal be that "they not accept in their college any English speaking boy from any parish of the Diocese." Other priests also wrote supporting the move to Bathurst, including Fr. William Varrily, now in charge of the West Bathurst Church. He too had taught at St. Michael's College for a number of years in the 1870's and was nominally a member of St. Thomas's board of governors (although it had never actually met). He felt the establishment of a college by the Eudists in Bathurst would not harm St. Thomas College because "the course of studies given in both are on different lines." The Eudist Fathers provided a classical education while St. Thomas provided a broader education, including a commercial programme.

Not all Barry's counselors were in favour. Fr. John Carter sided with the Basilians and wrote an angry letter. If the Eudist Fathers did not rebuild at Caraquet, he wrote, they should "resign from the Parish." He agreed that if they went to Bathurst "it would certainly take [away] some who would attend St. Thomas otherwise." He concluded that, "as St. Thomas College may be looked upon as the Established Seminary of the Diocese, it seems in line of duty to shield its existence."

Barry had other, although related, concerns. He was feeling his age. In 1918 he had suffered a

stroke and was worried about who his successor might be. Many Acadians in the diocese were feeling under-represented and wanted an Acadian bishop. When Rome had denied him a new diocese for French-speaking Catholics, he had at least made an attempt to provide Acadian episcopal representation. In 1912 Rome had accepted his recommendation of an Acadian priest, Fr. A. E. LeBlanc, for the position of Bishop of Saint John. This, however, had not satisfied many of the Acadians in the northern part of the province, and they outnumbered English-speaking Catholics. Barry's preference for his own replacement was Louis O'Leary, his Auxiliary Bishop. With an Acadian bishop now in Saint John, Barry feared that if Rome were to choose another Acadian bishop to replace him in the Chatham Diocese the Acadians would control the Church throughout the province, which would not bode well for the English-speaking St. Thomas College.

The College Burns Down

Nature took a hand in the debate. On March 13th, 1919, a massive fire totally destroyed the old college building, a disaster that jeopardized the college's very future. The building had been built in 1878 to replace the original college building, which had also burnt. It was reported in the *Gazette* that the fire was one of the most spectacular blazes ever witnessed on the North Shore. The huge four-storey wooden building, two hundred feet long with an eighty-foot wing, on its hill-top site overlooking the town, "made the sight awful and sublime as the fiery elements broke out through storey after storey, room after room, until the whole building was one seething inferno of demoniacal fiery rage." Within an hour the building was completely destroyed.

Fifty-eight boarding students as well as several of the teaching staff resided in the building at the time. Miraculously, all got out safely, although some, like Fr. Pageau, had narrow escapes. He was cut off by the flames in his third-floor room and had no way out but his window. Two students saw him, ran for a ladder and held it up as high as they could to try to reach the window. It was too short, and

when the flames got closer Pageau was forced to jump. He made a grab for the ladder on his way down but missed. He landed in the deep snow but was stunned by the fall, injured his head and shoulder, and broke his hip. He was taken to hospital and for the rest of his life walked with a limp. A staff member, William Lyons, who was the last to leave the students' dormitory, was cut off inside the front entrance. He tried unsuccessfully to reach the back door and eventually escaped through a side door. He emerged with blackened face and singed hair but not seriously injured.

Most escapees lost everything except the clothes they were able to grab as they fled. Many were in their night clothes and bare feet. The firemen arrived quickly, but the fire had spread so fast there was nothing they could do to save the building. They concentrated their efforts on keeping the fire from spreading to the nearby buildings, including the convent and the hospital. Sparks were carried throughout the town and even set a number of roofs on fire. The firemen were kept busy most of the night. It appeared that the fire started near the back entrance of the students' dormitory and was not detected until it had spread to the second floor. Faulty wiring was suggested as the probable cause.

Residents of the town turned out *en masse* to assist. Hotels and homes throughout the town, and even St. Luke's Methodist Church, took in the displaced students while the staff were accommodated in the bishop's residence. Bishop Barry announced that the school would rebuild immediately, although it would entail a major undertaking for the diocese. The building had been insured for only \$27,000, which it was estimated would cover but a small portion of the rebuilding cost. Gone to ashes were the library, the refectory, the chapel, the classroom furniture, all the furniture from the dormitories. Among the few objects saved by brave students was the Literary Society's treasured player-piano, the gift of their Honorary Vice-President Fr. Cormier.

The principal of the Grammar School offered the college some extra desks for temporary classrooms. Barry asked the rector of St. Joseph's College in Memramcook if he could take in boarders until the new St. Thomas was built. The rector responded that they could take in "four or five advanced

students who could not otherwise continue their studies” but that was all they could accommodate before the new school year in September, so it was decided to send the boarding students home. The Knights of Columbus had offered the use of their hall for classes, and on March 24 classes resumed for local day students.

A New College Building

St. Thomas having lost two wooden college buildings to fire in the past four decades, Barry decided this time to rebuild in stone or brick. The plan should allow for wings to be added as needed for future expansion . Plans were drawn up for a conservative, but handsome, three-storey free-stone building with a hipped copper-clad roof, its front exterior modulated by three gabled projections. The cost was estimated at \$85,000, considerably in excess of the insurance on the old building. Barry announced that construction would begin “as soon as the weather will permit.”

Fund-raising began immediately. Committees were established throughout the diocese. Enthusiastic campaign organizers personally guaranteed the funds needed for rebuilding in the event of a shortfall. A shortfall there promised to be. An auction in Chatham on April 29, 1919, raised only \$550. Announcements about the financial drive appeared in provincial newspapers with an appeal for assistance from all who were interested in higher education for Catholics. It was pointed out that unlike UNB, St. Thomas received no money from government and was “wholly dependent on voluntary contributions.” Judge James Connors of Chatham formed an organization in Bathurst to canvas for funds. Other groups were formed throughout the province. In May the rector of St. Thomas traveled to Saint John to address the congregation in the cathedral, urging their support for the province's only English-speaking Catholic educational institution. \$700 came in from St. Dunstan’s in Fredericton. Special events were held in many other places to add to the collections from the churches.

Optimistic as ever in spite of the slow pace of fund-raising, the bishop and the rector set June 8

as the date for the ground-breaking ceremony for the new building. It would be situated 300 yards from the site of the old building, which would place it “some distance from the brow of the hill.” It would have three storeys, but the basement would be completely usable, adding another storey of useful space for not only the furnace and cold storage rooms but also a library, reading room, recreation hall, refectory and kitchen. The dormitories, which had been in the top floor of the old college, for safety's sake would be located on the second floor. The new building would be “more modern in every respect” than the old one. When it was finished, the college would accommodate one hundred boarding and one hundred day students.

At the start of summer in 1919 it was announced that the building's copper roofing would be installed by the fall and the building finished by the new year. The prediction was optimistic, although funding was by now sufficient. Construction proceeded slowly because of delays in procuring materials and bad weather. In late July it was announced more realistically that the building would not be ready for occupancy until the following year, in time for fall term in September 1920. Unfortunately, the new timetable meant that Barry would not get to see the new college. His health was failing, he had already suffered from one heart attack, and he died in January 1920.

St. Thomas College continued in bare circumstances through the academic year 1919-1920 with reduced facilities, severely diminished enrolment, a truncated curriculum, and bereft of its founder. Financial support continued to come in from around the province and beyond, however, and not only from Catholics. On Labor Day, 1919, a money-raising “Grand Picnic” under the auspices of Chatham's Knights of Columbus took place on the estate of W.S. Loggie, a prominent Protestant merchant. The event, according to the paper, included speeches by “certain eminent public men” on “social questions of the day” and was reckoned to be a success.

Work on the new college building proceeded. The grand opening was set for Sunday August 8, 1920. A procession began at the cathedral, which was nearing completion although it had yet to be

consecrated, and wound its way to the new building. The college's long-time friend and supporter, Louis O'Leary, now Bishop of Charlottetown, blessed the building and together with St. Thomas's new Basilian rector, Fr. Frederick Meader, who had recently replaced Fr. Roach as St. Thomas's ninth rector, opened it for public inspection.

Barry would have been pleased. The newly completed building could accommodate eighty boarding students with class rooms for one hundred fifty. An up-beat press release reported that it had many features "which make for comfort and improved conditions in boarding school life," including up-to-date showers and bathroom facilities. The two dormitories were "large, bright and airy" and "scrupulously clean." The cuisine was reported to be "excellent, the bill of fare is second to none in Canada." The classrooms were bright and well ventilated. The building was heated by hot water and there was electricity everywhere for lighting. A Club room, a music room, a billiard room and a library were all designed to provide recreation "on stormy days." Outside, hand-ball alleys, tennis courts, a baseball diamond, a football field, and a hockey rink provided facilities for recreation both in summer and winter. The Saint John *Telegraph* reported that the building was "the finest of its kind in the province." Plans had also been made for a future addition to the building to accommodate more students, and even another building with gymnasium, science laboratories and private rooms for the arts students.

The community continued to show enormous support for St. Thomas. The Sisters at the Hôtel Dieu hospital, who looked after the college's sick students and who had made the hand painted Honour Roll for the earlier war memorial service, now presented the college with statues and a sanctuary lamp for the chapel. The Knights of Columbus canvassed for funds and contributed articles for the chapel. Mrs Troy and Mrs Nowlan one year worked all winter at the canteen in the rink, under the direction of Fr. Sheridan, to raise money for the college. Another lady did all the mending and washing of the linens and vestments used in the college chapel. Others gave their assistance at banquets providing silverware,

linens and decorations for the tables of the principal guests as well as decorating the students' tables. Such evidence of wide community support for St. Thomas College was uplifting. It would continue long after the Basilians left.

A new college building required some updated regulations. Although students sixteen and under still could not smoke, those over sixteen could do so if they had the written permission of their parents. The older students could operate a "Candy Pond" or "Tuck Shop," the profits from which would be used to equip the new chapel, although parents were asked not to be "too generous" with allowances. The college also introduced a "mature student" policy. Students over twenty-one years of age without a "qualifying certificate" or matriculation but who could satisfy the staff of their ability could be considered for admittance into the first year of the arts programme. Entrance to arts courses was also open to part-time students and to anyone not proceeding to a degree but who wished to attend as an "occasional student" in order to follow one or more courses of lectures. To be admitted they had to be at least nineteen years old and to "satisfy the staff of their ability to profit from the lectures."

On opening day in September 1920, St. Thomas College had seventy boarding students and fifty day students.

Resumption of Student Activities

The Literary Society had lost almost all its possessions in the fire, including some sixty-five costumes that had been collected since 1915. All that had been saved was the "Memorial of the Honor Roll" and the player-piano. The fire had also consumed all the Society's records. Since the boarding students had played the major role in its activities, and since they had been sent home after the fire not to return until September 1920, the Literary Society temporarily ceased operations. The editor of St. Thomas College's first year-book in 1922 would lament that because the names of all those involved in the Society's early formative years had been lost it was impossible to give the thanks and

acknowledgement due them for their efforts in furthering the Society and the college and “the cause of Catholic education.”

When St. Thomas opened in the fall of 1920, therefore, the Literary Society had to be organized from scratch. Denman Coyne, as the member of faculty most involved in the old Society and most interested in reviving it, undertook the task. He decided that, at least for the time being, the several different groups that previously made up the Society should be merged into one. He wrote that he had attempted to create an atmosphere that would keep “lonesome feelings and the blues away,” especially for the eighty per cent of students who were newcomers. He appears to have been successful. The Society's meetings were said to be filled with music, dancing and song. The card room and reading room were in constant use. Fr. Cormier, whose saved-from-the-fire player piano graced the Society's room, now donated to the Society books, magazines, botanical specimens, and a chalice for the student chapel. Judge Wilkinson, who had earlier provided the special flagpole for the war memorial, now presented some books as well as pictures of his old friends Bishop Rogers and Bishop McIntyre of Charlottetown. The Ladies Auxiliary of the Ancient Order of Hibernians canvassed for funds for the college and sold candy at their concerts, which paid for books and bookcases for the Society. They also made costumes for “several college plays” and concerts, as well as cassocks for the altar boys.

The Society made and sold candy at their entertainments in order to raise funds to re-equip their rooms in the new building. They purchased a “Brunswick talking machine” with many records of classical and up-to-date selections. They bought furniture and books. They even began a fund to buy a new pipe organ for the new college chapel, putting on “entertainments” at the Millbank school and the Temperance Hall in Loggieville. Local volunteers in those towns made all the arrangements, and eventually the Literary Society raised enough money to purchase an organ.

The Society also put on “Physical Culture” classes with “Callisthenics, Indian Clubs, Dumb Bells, Wands, etc..” The members took part in “Debating, Public Speaking, Singing and Elocution.” A

special dinner celebrated Thanksgiving Eve with a programme of music, recitations, and speeches. St. Thomas's new rector, Fr. Meader, presided over the festivities and the election of the Society's officers. The following day in the new college chapel the priests celebrated a high mass "for the repose for the soul of a former student and member of the Society."

At Halloween, 1920, the Society entertained with stories and musical numbers by Coyne and others. And just before term ended, the Society put on a "coming of Christmas" entertainment for staff and students. They presented the college's popular cook, "Chef" Alan Hamilton, with a handsome briar pipe. And before leaving for the holidays they gathered in front of the college, gave the college cheer, and called for the rector, to whom they presented a box of his favourite cigars, singing "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow."

The Society remained busy during the 1921 spring term with new concerts and banquets on St. Patrick's Day, St. Thomas's Day, and St. Basil's Day. It also put on a large minstrel show, which according to the newspaper accounts was "the most spectacular Minstrel Show ever held in the Maritime Provinces." It was held at the usual venue of the Opera House and sported a cast of 145, of whom 65 were students of the college. Denman Coyne as usual directed, and it was so popular that he later took it to Blackville and Newcastle. The performance in Blackville involved over one hundred people, and the local ladies put on a "sumptuous dinner for all the show people." Many others helped, and it raised a great deal of money for the college. Arthur Leggatt, a graduate of St. Thomas, looked after the finances, the advertising, and the transportation. Local musicians donated their time in rehearsals and as accompanists. At the end of term, the Society's executive declared it a "most enjoyable year." They had raised lots of money, and in the following year they would equip their rooms better than the old Society's rooms before the fire.

Graduation exercises after that first post-fire year were held outdoors on June 14, 1921. The campus was roped off and a space 90 feet by 120 feet reserved for performances. Outside lights were

installed, and an astounding three thousand people attended. Festivities included a concert by the St. Michael's Band, a sing-song, a banquet, sports, and various exhibitions by the Literary Society, including demonstrations by the sixty-five Physical Culture students of "Callisthenics and Drills of Swedish Movements." In commenting on the success of the graduation, Denman Coyne referred to

the spirit that mutually exists among the students – a spirit whereby all act in harmony, be it on the campus or in the class-room, and it is due to this pervading influence that we have met with such success.

The Literary Society continued to provide various entertainments in the fall of 1921. In January 1922 they presented *The Arrival of Kitty*, a three-act farce, at the Opera House as a fund-raiser.

Coyne was also keen to promote music among St. Thomas students. As he wrote in the first college year book in 1922:

College life at times would be disagreeable if we had no music to cheer us along. In St. Thomas's the study of this art is rapidly growing in favor amongst the boys. It certainly is pleasing to hear a group of students standing around a piano, singing with great enthusiasm their college songs and other melodies dear to them. It bespeaks happiness, and their happiness being audible, gives their listeners pleasure also. Not one recreative period in the day finds the piano unused.

The 1921-1922 academic year had set a record for the number of piano students. Coyne reported that he had also formed a group of violin players and was working on establishing an orchestra, since a set of instruments had been "partly promised." In light of the popularity of the musical shows of the past year, he hoped to be able to give more attention to singing. His work with the choir had also been successful. They had sung Solemn Vespers for the first time, also a high mass

with the Proper of the Mass, Requiem High Mass, Libera, Miserere, De Profundis, Vespers, [and] Benediction,

as well as the singing of numerous English hymns. The choir had even made progress with Gregorian Chant, Palestrina and part-singing. He hoped soon to acquire a better organ, one large enough to "dispense music in keeping with the singing." The instruments Coyne had secured for an orchestra finally arrived. In March, 1922, at the banquet on St. Thomas Aquinas Day, the college's new ten-piece

orchestra gave its premier performance.

From the point of view of St. Thomas's students and the surrounding community, affairs at St. Thomas were in excellent shape. A thoroughly cooperative atmosphere had been established between “town and gown.” As is often the case with institutions, however, people in charge are forced to put on a brave front when they know all is not well. Problems with the administration and financing of St. Thomas had persisted and soon threatened the college's very existence.

The Basilian Fathers Get Cold Feet

By 1921 the Basilians reached the end of their rope with running St. Thomas. Earlier, their hesitation about continuing to staff the college had led Barry in 1919 to contact the Very Reverend J. M. Filion, Provincial Superior of the Society of Jesus in Montreal, asking him to come to Chatham to discuss the possibility of the Jesuits taking over the college from the Basilians. Filion's response dated May 22, 1919, was lukewarm. Although he expressed interest in a college in Chatham, “or somewhere else” in the diocese, “no matter how handicapped we may be as to men,” he had pointed out that at the present time taking over “a complete college” was “a mighty difficult proposition.” He was, however, willing to talk about it to see if there was any way to work things out.

He was being frank with Barry. The English speaking portion of the Society of Jesus in Canada at that time had a serious dearth of men, especially priests. They were more interested in extending their activities in the Canadian West where the population was expanding rapidly with the arrival of thousands of Catholic immigrants from Europe. Filion had written that “if we are to do God's work in the West, it is in the East that we must expect to find the men.” He noted that although the Chatham Diocese might be a fertile ground for obtaining vocations, it might interfere with the bishop's needs to recruit priests for his own Diocese.

The next communication between Barry and Filion occurred in December 1919. On the 15th of

that month, Filion wrote apologizing for the long delay and expressing bad news. "It is painful to me," he wrote, "to have to confess our inability to meet Your Lordship's wishes in this matter." They had no one to send to Chatham, especially no English-speaking priests. They were caught in a vicious circle:

To obtain men we must have colleges but to undertake a college such as yours and maintain it, we would be obliged to close down the nascent College of Regina.

At one time he had actually considered doing so, that or St. Boniface College, but they had over fifty Ruthenian students whose families had recently immigrated from Eastern Europe in the English course at St. Boniface, and if there were no English courses for them he was afraid they would all leave. Filion himself had traveled out west to investigate for himself but had become discouraged. To give up St. Boniface would be to hand over the Ruthenian population "to the Presbyterian forces" which were trying to draw them over, and there were simply no other English speaking priests available. Things might change in four or five years, but he doubted it, so he was sorry to say finally that he could not help with the college in Chatham.

On top of the evidence that the Basilians were getting cold feet, Filion's refusal constituted another disappointment for Barry. The bishop had been ill for some time, suffering a stroke in 1918 and an operation for a strangulated hernia in 1919. He had come to rely heavily on O'Leary and wanted to resign. He was warned by Archbishop McCarthy of Halifax, however, that if he resigned, Bishop LeBlanc of Saint John would argue strongly that his replacement should be an Acadian rather than O'Leary. Barry dutifully did not resign in spite of his serious illness, but it was too late. He died shortly afterwards, on January 19, 1920.

The archbishop's warnings came true. In September, 1920, he acceded to demands to appoint an Acadian, Msgr. Patrice Alexandre Chiasson, as the new Bishop of the Diocese of Chatham. Louis O'Leary, instead of replacing Barry as the latter had hoped, was appointed Bishop of Charlottetown, replacing his younger brother Henry (who had moved on to become Bishop of Edmonton in Alberta).

The College was now suddenly bereft of three of its most influential supporters: Barry and the two O'Leary brothers.

Chiasson served as the third Bishop of the Diocese of Chatham. He would also be the last – because he himself would remove the see to Bathurst a decade later. He gave the Eudists permission to move their Sacré-Coeur College from Caraquet to Bathurst, where it would remain. St. Thomas's future was thus in serious doubt in 1920, especially given the Basilian Fathers' threats to abandon Chatham and St. Thomas. They agreed for the moment to run St. Thomas College for the 1920-1921 academic year, under the new rector, Fr. Meader, but the writing was on the wall.

Meader was an experienced teacher. Born in the United States, he had moved with his family to Ontario when he was young. He had graduated from the Normal School in Oshawa, then from the University of Toronto, then had entered St. Michael's College at that university as a novice. He had then taught at St. Michael's for fourteen years where, by the time of his appointment as rector of St. Thomas, he had become its registrar. He was described as “a man of remarkable energy” who supposedly “got along on four hours sleep a night.” (More sleep, however, might have been more healthful for Meader. He would die four years later, in 1924, at the age of 44.)

During his tenure as the college's ninth rector, a remarkable suggestion came out of the United States from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (established in 1906) that higher education in Canada's Maritime Provinces could be much improved. The Foundation offered to fund the amalgamation of all the universities and colleges in the area into one, large institute of higher learning. The American report proposed thereby to improve the “chaotic state of educational affairs” in the region. The Foundation suggested that Halifax should be the administrative centre of the new Maritime university. Unsurprisingly, the proposal fell on deaf ears in both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Meader, fresh from Ontario, unfortunately but significantly supported the proposal. It won him no friends and many enemies among college educators in New Brunswick, not to mention the

residents of Chatham.

Departure of the Basilians

The Basilians were making ready to leave St. Thomas. In May 1921, as the academic year was winding down, Bishop Chiasson received a ominous letter from Fr. Forster of St. Michael's College in Toronto. Foster informed the bishop that the Basilians' provincial council had met and that St. Thomas College had "received considerable attention" in the deliberations. They had many reservations. They were unhappy with Chiasson's decision to allow the Eudists to open a college in Bathurst, an area from which they drew many students. And the financial situation at St. Thomas was troublesome. The college, in short, had become a financial burden to the order.

Forster, obviously uncomfortable with having to deliver a poisoned chalice, detailed the order's complaints. The Basilians had four priests in Chatham. Each was receiving only \$500 per year. In order to provide them, the order was required to take them away from some other institution. At St. Thomas, to complement the teaching priests, the order had to hire lay teachers, "who hold inferior qualifications to the priests," at \$1,200 each for only nine months' work. That was more than double what the priests were paid. Such lay teachers did nothing but teach, which was "little more than half the work" required of priests.

The problem of finding sufficient staff at St. Thomas had existed for years. "Four priests," claimed Forster, "cannot conduct a boarding school satisfactorily." The finances of the college in Chatham were insufficient.

With the material [i.e., lay teachers] that can be picked up here and there, the results are not satisfactory and cannot be satisfactory. In other words we feel that considered academically the school, year by year, is disappointing.

The order, wrote, originally had accepted the arrangement in Chatham because they recognized that St. Thomas was "a new and struggling institution." But then came the disastrous fire and the great

expense the diocese had faced in rebuilding the college.

According to Forster, the order had done its part to share in the necessary sacrifice by sending four priests to keep the college going during the college year 1920-1921. Now, however, it could “no longer continue to supply professors at the old rate” of \$500 per person. In the church-run city schools in Ontario, teachers in the primary grades were paid \$900 per year. High school teachers averaged twice that. Consequently, the order was now asking the diocese to raise the annual salary of each of their four teaching priests to \$1,200, for a total of \$4,800. Forster realized that college revenues would never cover that amount and that the diocese would have to come up with the balance. Perhaps, he suggested, the parishes of the diocese could be persuaded to contribute to the college's maintenance “as is done in the rest of Canada and the United States.” St. Thomas College was certainly an asset to the diocese. But “the burden we have been carrying at Chatham,” concluded Forster, “has become altogether too heavy. Financially, as well as academically, the work is disappointing.” Forster invited Chiasson to respond.

Chiasson showed the letter to Meader, who wrote to Forster to inquire about the possibility of getting “graduates or advanced students” from Ontario colleges. Forster responded that he had tried but had found no one. Those teaching in Ontario colleges and still studying for a degree “only work for an hour or at the most an hour and a half a day in the classroom.” In return they get board, room, laundry, and something like \$80 to \$200 a year, according to their qualifications. If they came to St. Thomas they would be expected to work much harder and would have little time for study, which they would not find attractive.

Finally, in a letter dated July 24, 1922, Forster gave Chiasson official notice that in one year's time the Basilians would leave St. Thomas and Chatham for good. Chiasson replied in August that he regretted their decision, but understood their reasons for leaving. He also wrote:

I am very thankful for all that your fathers have done for the college and consequently for our

Diocese. I am also grateful for the kind notice of the withdrawal of your fathers almost a year in advance. It will give us time to look about for their replacement.

“Many Generous Friends”

Despite the financial uncertainties, despite the Basilians calling it quits, St. Thomas College had every appearance of success. In the eyes of the lay teacher Denman Coyne writing about the academic year 1921-1922, “success generally smiled upon the efforts of the Basilian Fathers in charge.” Life was strong both morally and physically. The college's spirit made student life, in Coyne's words, “wholesome and convivial.” It was

a spirit whereby all act in harmony, be it on the campus or in the class-room, and it is due to this pervading influence that we have met with so much success.

Much of the success, naturally enough, he attributed to the efforts of the student Literary Society and the Choir, which “united their forces in educating and entertaining the students.”

It is interesting to explore the articulate Coyne's observations at the time about what he thought St. Thomas needed for its future development. The college, he observed, was “young as well as new,” meaning that it lacked much of the equipment of older institutions. Yet it had “many generous friends whose numbers will only grow.” The college “is gaining slowly but surely.” The past year, he felt, had been successful in gaining even more friends as well as furnishings. Enrolment was high, but there were too few classrooms. If present trends continued, an addition would soon be needed, one even larger than the present new building. The library was inadequate, and lack of funds prevented it from purchasing essential classical works. “Light stories” could entertain the boys on stormy days but “the best books and authors” were needed. The science department needed more equipment. “What wonderful results would be ours,” Coyne asked, “if we had the proper equipment?” He hoped that some generous benefactors would come forward to help.

No such generous benefactors appeared. The financial situation in 1922-1923 was perilous. As

soon as the spring term ended in 1923, the Basilians packed their belongings and left. The farewell banquet at Chatham's Tourraine Hotel in late May for the the college's departing ninth rector, Fr. Meader, was a subdued affair, the other Basilian priests having already left. Chiasson now had to decide whether or not to keep the college open, for he had the authority to close it down. Chiasson was not Barry, and as Bishop of Bathurst his primary concern was his francophone flock. Yet closing St. Thomas unquestionably would alienate the anglophone Catholic community of Chatham and surrounding area. After all, they were also members of his flock and besides, they had shown a keen interest in supporting their college, their adopted *alma mater*. The future of St. Thomas College hung in the balance.

Sources, Chapter 2

For the material in this chapter, extensive use was made of the written correspondence of Bishop Thomas Francis Barry; Bishop Patrice Alexandre Chiasson; Very Reverend J. M. Filion; Fr. Henry O'Leary; Fr. Frederick Daniel Meader; Fr. Émile Plourde; Fr. William Roach; and Fr. Nicholas Roche, as the numerous quoted passages make clear. Much of their correspondence is located in the archives of the Diocese of Saint John [ADSJ]; copies of some of it is located in the relevant funds of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick [PANB].

Other sources used were:

James Fraser, *By Force of Circumstance* (Miramichi Press, 1970).

(Fr) B.J. Murdock, *Part Way Through* (Toronto: Mission Press, 1946).

St. Thomas College Calendars (various years).

St. Thomas Yearbook for 1921 and 1922.

(Fr) Émile Plourde, "Report on St. Thomas College" (1917).

Denman Coyne, essays in the *St. Thomas Yearbook* for 1921 and 1922.

Relevant contemporary accounts in the following newspapers: *The World* and *The Chatham Gazette*, Chatham newspapers; *The New Freeman*, a Saint John newspaper; the *Saint John Telegraph*; the *Fredericton Daily Gleaner*. Articles from these and other newspapers can also be found on the microfilms of the "Canadian Library Association Newspaper Microfilm Project", which was compiled from the Public Archives of Canada, the Public Archives of New Brunswick, the Nova Scotia Archives, the New Brunswick Museum, and the Saint John Free Public Library.

Much useful biographical information about people who lived in the Miramichi area can be found in W.D.Hamilton, *Dictionary of Miramichi Biography* (Saint John, 1997).

Other useful biographical information can be found in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online:

www.biographi.ca/index-e.html