Ministries in Black and White: The Catholic Sisters of St. Augustine, Florida, 1859-1920

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MINISTRIES IN BLACK AND WHITE:
THE CATHOLIC SISTERS OF ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA, 1859-1920

By
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Central to this study has been the support I received from Sister Thomas Joseph McGoldrick, SSJ, archivist for the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine. She very graciously opened the archives to me, introducing me to the remarkable letters the Sisters wrote back to their Motherhouse in Le Puy, France, in the early years of their ministry in Florida. The letters are a treasure, and I am pleased that Sister Thomas Joseph has recently published *Beyond the Call*, which includes many of the letters, making them available to the public. I am pleased, too, to have been able to contribute to the gathering of copies of letters that were missing from the collection. In March 2004, with support from the Office of Graduate Studies’ Dissertation Research Grant Committee, I went to the Sisters of St. Joseph’s archives at the Motherhouse in Le Puy, France, adding to my research files and completing the collection at the Sisters’ archives in St. Augustine. Critical to the research in France was Sister Jacqueline Pirot, a Sister of St. Joseph from Aurillac, France, who gave nearly two weeks of her time to assist me with my research at the Motherhouse. Her brother Jean-Pierre even met me at the airport in Paris and saw that I got on the correct train to Le Puy. I am also grateful for a J. Leitch Wright, Jr. Dissertation Travel Award and a Morris Endowment Summer Research Award that funded trips to Savannah and St. Augustine. Thanks also go to Dr. Richardson who provided copies of letters of the American Missionary Association teachers and ministers who came to Florida. Their letters,
paired with those of the Sisters of St. Joseph, provide a vehicle to compare the two groups’ work at a very personal level.

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ABSTRACT

“Ministries in Black and White: the Catholic Sisters of St. Augustine, 1859-1920” discusses the work of two orders of women religious, the Sisters of Mercy, who taught young white women in a convent school from 1859-1870; and the Sisters of St. Joseph, who came from France in 1866 to teach newly freed blacks after the Civil War, the only white Catholic order to do so. They remain an active order in Florida, with a Motherhouse still in St. Augustine. A significant part of the dissertation is a comparison of the Sisters of St. Joseph’s work against that of their major rivals, missionaries from the American Missionary Association. Using letters written by the Sisters back to their Motherhouse in Le Puy, France, the dissertation provides a rare view of the lives of these Catholic Sisters in St. Augustine and other parts of Florida, from the mid-nineteenth century through the era of anti-Catholicism in the early twentieth-century South. It carries the story through the pioneer years of the Sisters of St. Joseph’s work in Florida. In the telling of their story, the dissertation addresses the idea of domesticity, the proper role of women, and how it was reinforced in Catholic terms by women who seemingly defied the ideal.
INTRODUCTION

In September 1866, shortly after the end of the Civil War, at the behest of the Catholic Bishop over Florida, Augustin Verot, eight Catholic Sisters of St. Joseph from Le Puy, France, went to St. Augustine to teach the newly freed slaves in Florida. Arriving in the “Ancient City” of St. Augustine, they were assisted by Sisters of Mercy whom Verot had asked to come from the North shortly before the Civil War to teach white Catholic girls. The French Sisters’ mission was to capture the former slaves’ souls, to save them from the “heretical” teachings of Protestant missionaries who were already at work in Florida, and to educate blacks to be able to live in a free society as good Catholics. This dissertation tells the story of the efforts of both of these women religious' congregations in Florida and provides some analyses of their work through the lenses of the history of blacks, women, Florida, and Catholicism in the South, from the mid-nineteenth century to about 1920.

Although since the 1980s there has been a growing interest in evaluating the impact of the Catholic Church on American history, relatively little has been written on the Catholic Church in the South, especially after the Civil War, and women's history has been dominated by analyses of Protestant women from the northeast. This northeastern view emphasizes the development of networks and bonds between women in urban settings through voluntary associations, mother's clubs, and charitable works. Activities in such groups as the Women's Christian Temperance Union ultimately led to political involvement of women and social change. As Elizabeth Fox-Genovese points out, however, the antebellum South was overwhelmingly rural, and there was little opportunity for the development of such networks. She says, “Most rural southern women lived their lives within and interpreted their identities

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1 For an excellent collection essays about Southern Catholicism before the Civil War, see Randall M. Miller and Jon L. Wakelyn, eds., Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1983).
through the prism of specific households.” Another women's historian, Jean Friedman, adds that even postbellum southern women were slow to embrace change because of the constraints on them imposed by a strongly evangelical Protestantism as opposed to the generally more liberal Protestantism of the Northeast. Catholicism, however, was indeed present in the South and played a role in shaping the lives of women in the region, especially in communities where there was a Catholic church. This dissertation explores the Catholic Church’s influence, particularly through the impact of Catholic Sisters (also called women religious), beginning with their arrival to establish schools in Florida in the middle of the nineteenth century. A brief overview of the centuries-old history of women religious and their religious culture, particularly in France, is necessary to understand the work of the Sisters and their responses to what they encountered in the course of pursuing their missions.

Since the twelfth century, the Roman Catholic Church has provided an avenue for single women to have ministries devoted to prayer, education, and service to the needy. Only women who were single, because they were widows or because they had never married, were eligible for vocations as nuns. In the Middle Ages, these women were seen as “brides of Christ” and assumed that status by professing the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The vows were permanent, and only the Pope could grant dispensations from them. For a brief time, some women were able to work outside the convents, the establishments where they lived in community with other nuns. Because their chastity was essential to their roles as “brides of Christ,” Boniface VIII, who was Pope from 1294 to 1303, required that nuns be separated out and protected from the world in their convents. This “enclosure” in cloisters meant that they could not have contact with the laity, precluding any work among the poor and needy. Their


primary duty was to be the worship of God, exercised through a strict regimen of prayer, fasting, and other forms of self-denial.  

Over the next two hundred years, the Church grew lax in its teachings and practices. Superstition and ignorance was common among the laity; moral lapses and worldliness increased among popes, bishops, priests, and in the monasteries, and papal authority weakened. These issues led to the Protestant Reformation (1517-1648), a time of great turmoil as the Church, the centerpiece of Western society, lost its undisputed authority.  

The Catholic Reformation, also known as the Counter Reformation, was a response to the Protestant challenges. Many of its reforms were made in acknowledgement of the corruption that had entered the Catholic Church. The Council of Trent convened several sessions between 1545 and 1563 to address the Church’s internal problems and to defend or clarify Catholic doctrine. According to historian Elizabeth Rapley, the church “responded by a hardening of its positions:  a greater respect for the sacrament of the Eucharist, an enhanced devotion to the Virgin [Mary] and the saints, a more hierarchical and clerical ecclesiology, and a renewed emphasis on the superiority of the clerical over the lay state.”  

The Council also maintained that, counter to Martin Luther’s assertion, divine grace was not enough for salvation; the performance of good deeds also was necessary. Protestantism was considered heretical.

By the seventeenth century, however, the Catholic Church had come to espouse two tenets common to Protestantism. The first was a higher estimation of the value of the spirituality of the laity, an idea spurred by Catholic Bishop François de Sales in his 1608 work, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, in which he argued one did not have to be a vowed religious to be devoted to God, but could live a devout life as a lay person. The second was the principle that “all Christians, in order to be saved, must be capable of a conscious, and informed, assent to the call

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of faith.” Thus, Rapley points out, there was established an “underlying unity but deep antipathy” between Catholics and Protestants.7

The Council of Trent also reinforced the restrictions on women religious that had grown lax since Pope Boniface VIII had imposed enclosure on nuns. Once again, nuns were confined to convents to prevent their interaction with the outside world. Congregations that had taught girls in their convents continued to do so, but under the new rules, outside of the classrooms, the students were restricted from contact with the nuns.8

In 1607, the Compagnie de Notre-Dame became the first officially recognized female teaching congregation in France. They were located mostly in southern France, where Huguenots were most concentrated. The order was unusual in that its purpose was not worship but the education of girls. Its creation was motivated by a desire to counter the educational opportunities the Protestants were offering. The Filles de Notre Dame, as they were called, were modeled after the Jesuits, a masculine teaching order, but also consciously adopted the curriculum established by the Reformers. As explained by the Mother Superior over the school, “So that the girls will be attracted away from the tainted heretic schools and into this institution, we shall teach them reading, writing and various kinds of needlework – in short, all the accomplishments suitable for well-brought-up young maids.”9

Another woman’s order, the Compagnie de Sainte-Ursule (Ursulines), originated in Italy in the 1580s, but came to France in 1597, primarily as catechizers for girls. By 1700 ten to twelve thousand Ursulines had established about 320 communities throughout France. They provided free day schools for young girls, and later opened boarding schools for wealthier, paying students, a pattern of Catholic educational outreach that lasted for centuries.10

Some women wanted to establish orders that carried on the traditional tasks expected of women religious, prayer and contemplation, but also taught and performed charitable works.

7 Rapley, The Dévotes, 11.
8 Ibid., 45.
9 Ibid., 46.
10 Ibid., 48-52.
François de Sales, whose *Introduction to the Devout Life* inspired laywomen, and Jane de Chantal, a baroness he had been advising, founded the Visitantines (Visitation Sisters) in 1610. They did not follow the strict ascetic practices of the enclosed convents or take solemn (legally binding) vows. Prayer and contemplation were part of their daily regime, but significantly, visits to the sick and the poor were also among their duties. The issue of this “mitigated” enclosure was unacceptable to the local French archbishop, however, and despite de Sales’ arguments concerning the abilities of women and the propriety of such work for them, in 1616 the Visitation Sisters were forced to remove themselves from the world and accept full enclosure.  

In the 1620s, Vincent de Paul sought to avoid a similar fate by insisting that his Daughters of Charity not become women religious, but remain lay women, so as to elude the ecclesiastical and legal restrictions imposed on nuns. Daughters of Charity, therefore, made no public vows and wore regular clothing rather than habits. They formed a lay group, a confraternity, not a congregation of nuns. Such groups served in orphanages, hospitals, and refuges and established schools.  

Europe in the seventeenth century was in great turmoil, ravaged by wars, famines, and epidemics. Those who had opposed the women’s work among the needy finally accepted the unconventional “nuns” simply because they needed their services. “Uncloistered” women such as the Daughters of Charity proliferated; in France alone, ninety such congregations were founded between 1600 and 1720. Among them were the Sisters of St. Joseph, founded in Le Puy about 1650 under the leadership of Jesuit priest Pierre Médaille. Their primary purpose was to provide Christian education to children, but they were also “to work for their salvation and to devote themselves to all the exercises of which they were capable for the service of the neighbor.” A second directive expresses the range of their calling even more emphatically. They were to practice “all the holy spiritual and corporal works of mercy of which women are capable.” The Sisters of St. Joseph soon spread throughout France. Although they, like other

11 Ibid., 35-40; Coburn & Smith, *Spirited Lives*, 18.

Catholics, were persecuted and suppressed during the French Revolution, they reconstituted in the early nineteenth century and were a major teaching order again by mid-century.\footnote{For a detailed discussion the early Sisters of St. Joseph, see Patricia Byrne, C.S.J. “French Roots of a Women’s Movement: The Sisters of St. Joseph, 1650-1836” (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston College, 1985); Marguerite Vacher, \textit{Des “régulières” dans le siècle: Les sœurs de Saint-Joseph du Père Médaille aux XVII et XVIII siècles} (Clermont-Ferrand: Sœurs de Saint-Joseph de Clermont-Ferrand et Éditions Adosa, 1991), 69, 89-90. I greatly appreciate the assistance Dr. Byrne provided in translating the passages in Vacher’s work concerning the Sisters of St. Joseph’s mission. Patricia Byrne to Barbara Mattick, personal communication by e-mail. February 10, 2008.}

The parameters established for women religious during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries remained in force in the nineteenth century. In 1882, Sister Austin Carroll, a Sister of Mercy, translated \textit{The Religious: A Treatise on the Vows and Virtues of the Religious State}, written by French theologian the Rev. Jean-Baptiste Saint-Jure in 1658. The publisher considered the book to be the “greatest work of France’s greatest theologian,” and hoped it would “cause a greater diligence and assiduity in the care of religious perfection.”\footnote{J.-B. Saint-Jure, \textit{The Religious: A Treatise on the Vows and Virtues of the Religious State} (N.Y.: P. O’Shea, publisher, 1882), ix.} Quoting writings of the early Church fathers, the work gives detailed insight into the intended purpose of vows and congregational rules in the lives of men and women religious: to facilitate their quest for perfection. The taking of vows was the means by which one entered the religious state; vows were what set a religious apart from everyone else. Their role remains the same today.

Religious vows are perpetual or temporary, solemn or simple. Both solemn and simple vows can be taken for life, usually after a temporary period. Solemn vows, though, make it legally impossible for a religious to act contrary to them. For example, a solemn vow of chastity makes it impossible for a religious to be legally married, while a solemn vow of poverty makes it impossible for a religious to inherit. Simple vows, however, carry no legal weight, and are in force only in the ecclesiastical/spiritual sense.\footnote{Hector Papi, S.J., \textit{Religious Profession: A Commentary on a Chapter of the New Code of Canon Law}. (N.Y.: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1918), 6-7.} The distinction between solemn and simple vows is a defining factor in classifying women religious. Women who are cloistered to carry out the traditional duties of worship and contemplation away from the rest of the world take solemn vows and are technically “nuns” and members of “orders.” Women who practice a modified
contemplative life and work “in the world” take simple vows and are technically “sisters” and members of “congregations.” In common parlance, however, sisters are often referred to as nuns, and members of orders.

Of the three vows -- poverty, chastity, and obedience -- obedience was, as Rapley says, “the cornerstone” of tridentine Catholicism and considered the supreme virtue. Its elevated position reflected society’s and the Church’s “craving for law and order” in the midst of the tumultuous sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The trend to place women under the authority of their husbands was mirrored in the Catholic Church, which put women religious under the authority of men’s orders or bishops, and treated them much like minors.\(^{16}\)

Saint-Jure considered the vow of obedience to be the “principal and most excellent of all.”\(^{17}\) The vow requires obedience to one’s direct Superior, but Superiors do not have absolute power. Each order or congregation has a Rule which defines the purposes and regulations of the organization. Members of the order or congregation voluntarily accept this Rule and are bound to obey it. Superiors are also bound by the Rule in that they cannot order one under their authority to do something that is contrary to their order’s Rule. The Rule provides the meaning and structure for each religious body and is sacrosanct. As explained by Rapley, “no Superior, not even the Pope . . . can, without just reason, command a religious to do something contrary to his rule.” Among women, for example, a superior cannot order those under her authority to accept an assignment that would place the subordinate’s life in danger. Missions and dangerous assignments required volunteers. Saint-Jure’s 240-page discussion of the virtues of obedience makes it clear, however, that he considered prompt, unquestioning, and cheerful obedience to be the most spiritually efficacious kind, a sure sign of self annihilation, giving oneself up to God totally. The book, intended to be read by religious, provides a clear view of the expectations demanded and the ideals to be sought by women religious in the nineteenth century. To a large degree it explains the actions and responses of the Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of St. Joseph as

\(^{16}\) Rapley, The Dévotes, 12, 27-28.

they carried on their missions in Florida in the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

Another important aspect in understanding nineteenth century Catholicism for this study is the change that occurred in popular piety. The roots of these changes lie in the official policies adopted after the Council of Trent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to purify the common practices of the laity. In Ireland, in particular, devotional practices were highly influenced by the pagan folkways of the peasants,\textsuperscript{18} lending support to the Protestant charge that Catholics were ignorant and superstitious.\textsuperscript{19} The official pietistic practices adopted by the Council of Trent remained in force in the nineteenth century, and were augmented when, in an effort to standardize Catholic practice and to unify the Church under the See of Rome, Pius IX, who was the Pope from 1846 to 1878, encouraged a renewal of popular piety practiced by the masses.

Although Catholic and Protestant ideas of domesticity in the nineteenth century were very similar in that both focused on a strong home as being essential to the welfare of society, the differences between them are best seen by comparing their pietistic practices. Protestants held that the home should be the center of devotions; pious families would gather around a family altar for daily devotions led by the father. Family Bibles held a prominent place in such homes, and personal Bible reading was considered the key to personal spiritual growth. An individual’s personal relationship with God, rather than a communal relationship with the Church, was most important. Sunday worship at church centered on the preaching of God’s word and instruction, and services often lasted throughout the day.\textsuperscript{20}


\textsuperscript{19} Colleen McDannell, \textit{The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900} (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1986), 14-15. McDannell’s study focuses on Irish Catholics in the North, but many of her findings apply to Southern Catholics in places where there were Catholic churches.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 56, 72, 90-91.
In contrast, Catholics emphasized the importance of membership in the church community. Preaching was secondary to observing the priest perform the sacrifice of the Mass, something that could only be done by a priest at the church. Although Catholics were not forbidden to read the Bible, personal Bible study was not encouraged until the very late nineteenth century, for fear that it would be misinterpreted by a largely illiterate laity. As education became more widespread in the United States, Bible reading was promoted to a greater extent. Before then, instead of Bible reading, the Church encouraged the use of the rosary, or “praying the beads.” Catholics also tended to use religious articles such as statues, holy pictures, and medals. These were not to be worshiped, as claimed by the Protestants, but were to remind Catholics of religious teachings. In Chapter Three’s examination of the work of the Sisters of St. Joseph and their Protestant counterparts from the American Missionary Association, the contrast between these different approaches to pious religion stands out distinctly.

Although religious orders were well established in Europe for centuries, the first nuns did not come to the United States until the 1790s. The country as a whole then was "avowedly Protestant" and did not trust Catholics, considering them to be superstitious idolaters. With the great influx of immigrants from Ireland and Germany between 1829 and 1859, the number of


\[21\] Ibid., 93
\[22\] Ibid. 85-89.
\[24\] McDannell, 65.
Catholics increased rapidly. European Sisters were recruited by the American Catholic Church to operate schools, hospitals, orphanages and other agencies to assist the needy immigrants; indeed, thirty-nine foundations, communities of Sisters, were established in the antebellum period. A review of descriptions of orders in the United States in the twentieth century reveals that women who felt the call to such a life in the Catholic Church generally had to be between the ages of 15 and 36, of reasonable intelligence, in good health, and of high character to be accepted into a religious order. Those conditions probably are not much different from those applied a hundred years before.27

Most of the Catholic immigrants who came to the United States in the 1830s and 1840s went to Northern cities, where American workers saw them as threats to jobs. Soon anti-Catholic sentiments raged in the North. Nuns and priests, many of them immigrants themselves, dedicated themselves to working with the new arrivals. They were subjected to physical and verbal attacks and were accused of fantastic sexual immorality, murder, and infanticide.28 Such attacks were justified in the eyes of their perpetrators because they considered the decision of nuns to live single lives of celibacy to be unnatural, and their sworn obedience to their Superiors, including the Pope, to be anti-American. They even accused Catholics of plotting to take over the country for the Pontiff. Unlike the North, however, the South was primarily rural, with comparatively few immigrants and even fewer Catholics.29 Thus the anti-Catholic rage of the North was not prevalent in the prosperous antebellum South.30

For nuns in particular, however, their lives challenged the accepted concept of true womanhood or domesticity that was embodied by submission to a husband and motherhood.

27 Thomas P. McCarthy, C.V.S., Guide to the Catholic Sisterhoods in the United States (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1952), passim. Woods’ study of congregations of women religious in the United States from 1727 to 1868 shows that eighteen orders were active in the South, but none in Florida is listed. The essay, however, provides an otherwise good overview of women religious in the South.

28 Ewens, 328.

29 Miller, 12.

According to Alexis de Tocqueville in his 1840 commentary on American life, "... in the United States the inexorable opinion of the public carefully circumscribes woman within the narrow circle of domestic interests and duties and forbids her to step beyond it."\(^{31}\)

The American ideology of domesticity arose from middle-class Protestants in the northeast. It emphasized the essential role of the family in imparting cultural values and maintaining social order. Women were the primary agents in the process: "Woman as wife and mother represented a beacon of stability, a preserver of tradition, in a society undergoing unprecedented industrial development, urban growth, and geographical expansion."\(^{32}\) Women, indeed, owed it to society to fulfill the prescribed roles of wife and mother.\(^{33}\) In her article, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," Barbara Welter described what was expected of women in antebellum America. The four primary virtues were piety or religious devotion, sexual purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.\(^{34}\) Religion was the province of women, for men were supposedly too occupied with the day to day life of business to be concerned with piety. Women, though, could pursue piety without neglecting their responsibilities of caring for the home. Sexual purity was not necessarily expected for men but, for women its "absence was unnatural and unfeminine." Without purity, a female could not be a true woman.\(^{35}\)

Although social norms allowed for "single blessedness," considering a single life to be better than a "loveless or unhappy marriage," most women fulfilled these ideals of womanhood in the state of marriage and out of a home. In their homes, women were expected to exercise piety, not only teaching their children, but also bringing men "back to God." They were to make their homes places of comfort and cheer by nursing the sick, maintaining a well ordered


\(^{32}\) Mannard, 131.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 133-134.


\(^{35}\) Welter, 152, 154.
household, and gracing their surroundings with beauty. Girls, therefore, had to learn to be proficient in various kinds of needlework and drawing room skills, such as singing and playing an instrument. Academic education for women was fine as long as it did not interfere with the primary goal of becoming a good homemaker. The seminaries and academies for girls emphasized that their programs would not hinder the development of the skills of domesticity, but would "enlarge and deepen" a girl's ability to fulfill her God-given role of wife and mother. Proponents feared that nuns encouraged young girls they taught in parochial schools to follow their example in entering convents, thus eroding the stabilizing influence of wives and mothers. The establishment of Protestant schools for girls became a focus of concern for the Protestant community, for through education they believed they could combat the growth of convents and the entrenchment of Catholicism in America.

Catholics, however, defended their convent schools by claiming that the nuns supported and fostered the very ideals of motherhood and domesticity espoused by the Protestants. Furthermore, nuns fully realized that most young women were destined to be wives and mothers and insisted that they made no effort to coerce those who did not have a vocation for the religious life. They encouraged all women to live for God. In fact, "the four qualities identifying the antebellum true woman basically dovetailed with the virtues of the ideal nun as defined in the rules and constitutions of various religious sisterhoods. The convent institutionalized the true woman's attributes of piety, purity, and submissiveness in a nun's religious calling and her vows of chastity and obedience." Rather than encouraging the girls in the academies to enter the convent, the main goal of the teaching nuns was to prepare their students to be proper wives in middle- and upper-class homes. Just as it was in the seventeenth century, Catholic curricula were similar to those offered at Northern Protestant seminaries for

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36 Ibid., 162-170, passim.

37 Mannard, “Maternity of the Spirit,” 135. Ironically, the Filles de Notre Dame established their schools in seventeenth century France to counter the influence of Protestant schools, and then patterned their schools after the Protestant model.

38 Ibid., 142.
girls. Nuns, therefore, supported rather than thwarted the enculturation of young girls with the ideals of domesticity.

According to Fox-Genovese, the ideal of domesticity was common throughout the country, but was especially strong in the South.\textsuperscript{39} An examination of the work of Catholic nuns in St. Augustine, Florida, provides a vehicle for evaluating the validity of these paradigms in regard to a Southern Catholic community in the middle of the nineteenth century. As already mentioned, a large body of work already exists about the Catholic Church and Catholic women religious. Little of it, however, deals with the Church in the South, and that which does focuses primarily on the antebellum period. Writing a dissertation about the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of St. Joseph in St. Augustine has offered an opportunity to tell more fully the story of these remarkable women and to evaluate their significance in Catholic, women’s, and African-American history as it was played out in Florida and the South. It also contributes to a broader understanding of the city of St. Augustine’s place in urban history, educational development in Florida, and reforms in Florida and the South during the Reconstruction and Progressive eras.

Until the 1980s, the only works about the Sisters of St. Joseph were done by their own members, two as Master’s theses about the Sisters’ schools. Michael Gannon’s works, \textit{Rebel Bishop} (1964), a biography of Augustin Verot; and \textit{The Cross in the Sand} (1965), a history of the Catholic Church in Florida from 1513 to 1870, provide a great amount of detail, but give traditional top-down interpretations. Jane Quinn’s \textit{The Story of a Nun: Jeanie Gordon Brown} (1978) also provides much valuable detail about the history of the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine, but is primarily focused on a single member of the congregation and does not place their story in the broader historical context.

Since the 1980s, a large body of scholarly research on women religious has been produced, spurred in part by the establishment of the History of Women Religious Conference in 1987. This organization’s triennial meetings to present research papers have brought forth a wealth of scholarship concerning this specialized aspect of women’s history. Fine examples of products of this effort are Carol K. Coburn and Martha Smith’s \textit{Spirited Lives: How Nuns}

\textsuperscript{39} Fox-Genovese, \textit{Within the Plantation Household}, 203.
Shaped Catholic Culture and American Life, 1836-1920 (1999), and Diane Batts Morrow’s Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time: The Oblate Sisters of Providence, 1828-1860 (2002). So also, work on black history has come into its own, with publications such as: David R. Colburn’s Racial Change and Community Crisis: St. Augustine, Florida, 1877-1980 (1985); Jacqueline Jones’ Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873 (1980); and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham’s, Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920 (1993).

The history of education in the South is another area where this dissertation provides a broader understanding. St. Mary’s/St. Joseph’s Academy appears to have been typical of other convent schools, but entries from Pascua Florida, the students’ publication, adds greatly to the previous theses on the Sisters of St. Joseph’s schools by providing a better understanding from the girls’ point of view. The standard work on public education in Florida, Thomas Everett Cochran’s History of Public-School Education in Florida (1921), provides little about the schools in St. Augustine or the interaction of public and Catholic parochial schools. Gilbert Wilson’s research, published in several articles in the Ancient City Genealogist and on a Web site, is the most extensive discussion of the public schools in St. Johns County, and mentions the work of the Sisters of St. Joseph in the public school system. Chapter Six on anti-Catholicism shows how that arrangement came to be, and how the anti-Catholicism of the early twentieth century brought it to an end.

The Catholic Church, an international body, provided a network for women religious, but were the Catholic Sisters able to utilize it in the same way Protestant women used church groups and woman’s clubs? Chapter One on the Sisters of Mercy and Chapter Two on the early Sisters of St. Joseph who came to Florida in 1866 show how women from different groups participated in the international network of women religious.

The history of St. Augustine is also a part of the story. Even though St. Augustine, established by the Spanish in 1565, is the nation’s oldest city, and served as the colonial capital of East Florida, it has never had a population of more than about 12,500. Its importance shrank dramatically when Tallahassee became the capital of the American Territory of Florida in 1824 and then the state capital in 1845. Impoverished during the Civil War, hampered by a shallow port, struck by freezes that destroyed its citrus industry in the late nineteenth century, and
dwarfed by the rising city of Jacksonville only thirty-eight miles away, St. Augustine never regained the importance it had as an urban center in colonial Florida. The community settled into its identity as the quaint “Ancient City” largely supported by tourism.

Little work has been done concerning St. Augustine’s history as a city. Few of the major works on the urban history of the South, therefore, mention St. Augustine, even in discussions of colonial cities. Major titles include *The Urban South*, edited by Rupert B. Vance and Nicholas J. Demerath (1954, reprint 1971); *Slavery in the Cities: The South 1820-1860*, by Richard C. Wade (1964); *The Urban Ethos in the South, 1920-1930*, by Blaine A. Brownell (1975); *The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South*, edited by Blaine A. Brownell and David R. Goldfield (1977); *Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers, Southern City and Region, 1607-1980*, by David R. Goldfield (1982); *The Rise of the Urban South* (1985); and *The Urban South: A History* (1990) by Lawrence H. Larsen; and *Region, Race and Cities: Interpreting the Urban South* by David Goldfield (1997). With some variation, these books focus most commonly on Atlanta, Baltimore, Birmingham, Charleston, Memphis, Mobile, Nashville, New Orleans, Norfolk, Richmond, and Savannah. Jacksonville is the only city in Florida mentioned consistently.

Most research on St. Augustine has focused on either the colonial period or the Flagler Era, when Henry Flagler built magnificent hotels and lured wealthy northern tourists there in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *The Oldest City: St. Augustine, Saga of Survival*, published by the St. Augustine Historical Society in 1983, is one of the few resources on St. Augustine that provides a broad view of the city’s history from the colonial period to modern times. The Society called upon eight experts to write essays concerning the periods with which they were most familiar. The years after the Civil War and the efforts of St. Augustine’s city fathers to bring the Ancient City into the modern era are discussed in two essays, Thomas Graham’s “The Flagler Era, 1865-1913,” and Robert N. Dow, Jr.’s “Yesterday and the Day Before, 1913 to the present.” The book, however, is meant for a popular readership, and there are no citations. Graham’s book, *The Awakening of St. Augustine: The Anderson Family and the Oldest City: 1821-1924* (1978) is more informative for scholars.

Few historians have explored Florida during the Reconstruction and Progressive Eras. John Wallace’s *Carpetbag Rule in Florida* (1885) and Jerrell Shofner’s *Nor Is It Over Yet:...*
Florida in the Era of Reconstruction, 1863-1877 (1974), and Joe M. Richardson’s The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877 (1965) are the most important broad-scaled works on Florida during Reconstruction. Of particular value to this study are Richardson’s articles on the work of the American Missionary Association in Florida and his book, Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890.

The heart of this dissertation is Chapter Three, which explores the postbellum rivalry between the Catholic French Sisters and the Protestant American Missionary Association teachers and missionaries. Most of the chapter’s information comes from the approximately 335 letters the Sisters of St. Joseph wrote back to their Motherhouse in Le Puy, France. Copies of fewer than half of the letters from the first couple of years (1866-1867), the 1880s, and early 1900s were held at the Archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph in St. Augustine. As I began my research, many of those letters had been translated and typed, and Sister Thomas Joseph McGoldrick, the archivist for the Archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine, gave me access to them.

However, the collection held few letters from the 1870s, the years of the Sisters’ most intense mission work. In March 2004, funded in part by a Dissertation Research Grant from Florida State University, I spent two weeks in Le Puy at the Sisters of St. Joseph’s Motherhouse to do further research. Assisted by Sister Jacqueline Pirot, a Sister of St. Joseph from Aurillac, France, I was able to locate and make copies of letters that were missing from the collection in St. Augustine. Not until the 2008 publication of Sister Thomas Joseph’s book, Beyond the Call, were any of the letters by the French Sisters of St. Joseph accessible to the general public.

After the Sisters in LePuy received letters from Florida, they numbered them and copied them into large ledger books. The handwriting is very consistent, but very small and sometimes hard to read. They, of course, were written in French; even letters originally written in English were translated into French before being entered into the book. There were nearly 200 copied letters, plus a few loose original letters. Translating the French letters was extremely labor intensive, but they provide a rare look into the day-to-day lives of these remarkable women, revealing their inner thoughts, struggles and hopes, and even their senses of humor, as they experienced the American South.
Of particular value are their comments about the blacks they came to teach. Coming from a remote part of France, the Sisters had never seen black people before, and their comments are refreshingly candid. Their references to the Protestant missionaries with whom they competed to save black souls were also quite frank, and demonstrate how keen the rivalry was between the two groups. Most of the letters retrieved from Le Puy were written 1870-1875, the period of their most intense competition.

Complementing the letters from the Sisters are those of the missionaries of the American Missionary Association (AMA) who went to Florida during the Civil War to teach the freedmen. Dr. Joe Richardson graciously lent me copies of letters he acquired during his extensive research on the AMA. Heretofore, the efforts to evangelize the freedmen after the Civil War have been known only from the Protestant viewpoint, with only slight references to Catholic opposition. This dissertation brings the two stories together and addresses such questions as: What was the nature of the Sisters’ work with blacks? Did their efforts result in failure, as many, including Verot, thought, or were there lasting influences that superseded the fact that relatively few African-Americans remained Catholic or converted to Catholicism? Were there any differences in the way the Sisters taught blacks and poor whites? How did their work compare to that of the AMA?

Chapters Four, Five, and Six relate the Sisters’ work to nurse victims of yellow fever, care for the poor, and battle anti-Catholicism. Placed against the background of the experiences of blacks, women, and Catholics in the South, the chapters enrich our understanding of life in Florida during the eras of Reconstruction and Progressivism, and demonstrate that Catholics, though a minority in the state, played no small role in shaping Florida’s history.
CHAPTER ONE
PREPARING THE WAY: THE SISTERS OF MERCY

Jean-Pierre Augustin Verot was consecrated Vicar Apostolic of Florida and as titular Bishop of Danaba in Baltimore, Maryland, on April 25, 1858, and arrived in St. Augustine on June 1, 1858. Although Florida had been a flourishing center of Catholicism as a Spanish colony, by the time Verot assumed his new post it was a struggling mission field with only three or four priests. Between 1821, the end of the Second Spanish Period, when Florida became part of the United States, and 1858, few bishops had visited Florida. Verot's attentions to St. Augustine were, therefore, greatly appreciated by the Catholics there. The affection with which he was regarded by the people of St. Augustine was expressed in the announcement of his return from a recruitment trip to obtain more clergy that appeared in the local newspaper, the St. Augustine Examiner: "We need not say how great is the joy of his spiritual children, who so well appreciate the winning qualities of this worthy Prelate. It is with unfeigned pleasure we welcome and record his safe return to the 'Ancient City' and the great success he has attained in his tour in Europe."

The cheerful announcement of Verot's return was a reflection of St. Augustine's close relationship with the Catholic Church in spite of the recent years of neglect. The Ancient City, settled by Catholic Spaniards nearly three hundred years before, remained a Catholic town. In 1860, St. Johns County, for which St. Augustine was the seat of government, had 2,000 Catholics in six churches, more than twice as many as the Methodists who were the next largest denomination. The largest concentration of Catholics was in St. Augustine, with an estimated population of 952 white and 376 black Catholics. The city was actually a Catholic enclave in


2 St. Augustine Examiner, October 29, 1859. Hereafter cited as Examiner.

3 U.S. Census, Miscellaneous Statistics, 1860. St. Johns County then included what is now Flagler County.

4 Gannon, Rebel Bishop, 25.
Florida, for like most of the rest of the South in 1860, the state was rural, and most of its inhabitants were Protestant. Florida received an influx of Protestants when the colony was transferred from Spain to the United States in 1821. Yet, in spite of the alarm of the Catholic bishop who wrote in June 1823 that St. Augustine was "overrun with Methodists and Presbyterians," the Ancient City remained a Catholic town and Protestants remained in the minority. Furthermore, the Protestants who came into Florida were not overtly antagonistic to Catholics. The lack of hostility to Catholics in Florida and the South in general, as opposed to the hatred exhibited in the urban Northeast, was probably largely due to the rural character of the South and the small Catholic presence there.

The Catholics of St. Augustine, therefore, were overjoyed when the bishop returned with six priests, and “two Religious Ladies and several other persons to aid him in the Florida Mission.” He also had five students at the Theological Seminary of Baltimore preparing for the work in Florida. Before the end of the year, Verot also recruited five Sisters of Mercy from Providence, Rhode Island, in the Diocese of Hartford, Connecticut, and five Brothers of the Christian Schools (Christian Brothers) from Canada.

The Sisters of Mercy is a Roman Catholic order founded in Dublin, Ireland, by Catherine McCauley on December 12, 1830. Among the first Sisters of the new order was Frances Warde. As Mother Mary Frances Xavier, she brought seven Sisters of Mercy to the United States to establish a convent in Pittsburgh in 1843. There, the Sisters operated educational institutions,

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7 Gannon, *Cross in the Sand*, 152.

8 * Examiner*, October 29, 1859.

9 Gannon, *Cross in the Sand*, 168; Typescript from the Archives of the Sisters of Mercy, Providence, Rhode Island, on file at the Archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph, St. Augustine, #301.2, hereafter cited as ASSJSA.
orphanages, and hospitals.\textsuperscript{10} By 1846, the Sisters had founded additional Mercy convents in New York City and Chicago.\textsuperscript{11} Bishop Bernard O’Reilly from Providence, Rhode Island, was greatly impressed with the Sisters of Mercy’s work, and in 1850 asked them to establish a house in Providence, the See of the Diocese of Hartford, to teach. Ursuline Sisters had gone to Boston in 1820, and Daughters of Charity, founded by Elizabeth Seton, had been established there in 1831, but the Sisters in Providence would be the first Sisters of Mercy in New England.

Because of strong anti-Catholic influences of the Know-Nothings in New England at this time, the Sisters’ decision to accede to Bishop O’Reilly’s plea was not lightly made. According to Sisters of Mercy rules, no sister is forced to accept an assignment.\textsuperscript{12} Of those who offered themselves for Providence, in addition to Mother Xavier, four were chosen: Srs. M. Paula Lombard, M. Josephine Lombard (Sr. Paula’s blood sister), M. Camillus O’Neil, and M. Joanna Fogarty. The Sisters, dressed in “civilian” clothes rather than their habits, stole into Providence under cover of night on March 11, 1851, but because their first Mass in the city was held the next morning, March 12 is considered the foundation day for the Sisters of Mercy in Providence. The conditions were very poor, especially when compared with the comforts of the well established motherhouse in Pittsburgh, and the atmosphere was very hostile. Know-Nothing rowdies regularly broke the convent windows, shouted at them during the night, and taunted the Sisters when they were out in public.\textsuperscript{13} Even so, within six months they had grown to twenty members and had full ministries underway, teaching children, visiting the sick, helping the poor, catechizing beginners in the Catholic faith, establishing sodalities, and instructing adults.\textsuperscript{14}

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\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Seventy-Five Years in the Passing with The Sisters of Mercy, Providence, Rhode Island, 1851-1926} (Providence, Rhode Island: Providence Visitor Press, 1926), 31-40, 75.
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{A Little Sketch of the Work of the Sisters of Mercy in Providence, Rhode Island, from 1851 to 1893} (Providence: J.A. & R.A. Reid, Printers, 1893), 14.
\textsuperscript{12} Sister Mary Hermenia Muldrey, R.S.M. \textit{Abounding in Mercy: Mother Austin Carroll.} (New Orleans: Habersham, 1988), 35.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 32-33.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Seventy-Five Years in the Passing}, 80.
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Their St. Xavier’s Academy grew steadily, leading to the construction of a brick facility on Claverick Street in 1856.

In March 1855, as the Claverick Street building was still under construction, a Know-Nothing mob surrounded the convent, threatening to burn it down and kill all its inhabitants. At the risk of his life, Bishop O’Reilly defended the nuns by confronting the crowd, and after the mayor of Providence read the Riot Act, the crowd finally dispersed. For several nights after that Catholic men stood guard around the convent, and there were no further incidents. The Sisters continued with their ministries in Providence, and soon, at the requests of other bishops, houses were established in other dioceses: Rochester, New York, in 1857; Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1858; and St. Augustine, Florida, in 1859. Mother Frances Xavier Warde had left Providence to establish the new house in Manchester. The new superior in Providence was Mother M. Josephine Lombard, one of the original Sisters of Mercy in Providence. In 1859, she sent five Sisters to St. Augustine.

The Sisters of Mercy who went to St. Augustine were led by a young Mother Superior, Mary Ligouri from Virginia, who was only twenty-five years old. By 1860, there were a total of nine other Sisters at the newly established St. Mary's Convent in St. Augustine: Sister Mary Agnes, age 28, from England; Sister Mary Aloysius, age 21, from Massachusetts; Sister Mary Evangelist, age 21, from Maryland; Sister Mary Teresa, age 30, also from Maryland; Sister Mary Augustine, age 35, from France; Sister Mary Josephine, age 40, also from France; Sister Mary Regina, age 25, from Florida; Sister Mary Ann, age 24, from Ireland, and Sister Mary Dora, age 35, also from Ireland. Sisters in the order all had religious names beginning with "Mary," and were sometimes referred to using only the second name. Sister Regina, from Florida, probably joined the convent after it was established in St. Augustine.


16 *Seventy-Five Years in the Passing*, 91-96, 41-42.

17 U.S. Census, Population Schedules, St. Johns County, 1860. The census taker misspelled Mother Liguori’s name, entering it as Legoria; Sister Aloysius’ name, entering Aloisious, and Sister Regina’s name, entering Ragina.
The 1860 census population schedule for Providence shows that Mother Ligouri and the others sent to the “Ancient City” had left a substantial institution. In addition to Mother Josephine Lombard, there were twenty-three other Sisters, twenty-one of whom were born in Ireland; the other three were from New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. Seventy-seven girls, ages 2-14, boarded at the convent school, St. Xavier’s Academy. Only twelve of the girls were over ten years old. In addition, 24 boys and 10 girls, ages 2-17, attended the Sisters’ day school. At the Sisters of Mercy’s Home for Orphans and Friendless Children, located next door to the convent, two black women were employed as servants.\textsuperscript{18}

The teaching methods of the Sisters of Mercy were probably shaped by the teaching philosophies held by Mother Xavier Warde. She firmly believed in the power of joy and encouraged her Sisters: “Since God loves a cheerful giver, let us try to be cheerful workers, taking nothing away from the glory of His blessed service by half-heartedness in the discharge of our duties. We must be steeped in holy joy and eagerness to imitate our Divine Model in performing the lowly offices of labor and prayer, teaching and instructing . . . .”\textsuperscript{19} She disapproved of severe punishment, preferring instead the use of love and fear of disapproval from teachers or parents, and as punishment the loss of places of honor or the removal of merits. She sought to instill “honesty in thought, word, and deed . . . truth and sincerity, exerting every effort to obviate falsehood and deceit.”\textsuperscript{20}

The Sisters’ schools ran from 9:00 am to noon, then from 2:00-4:00 in the afternoon. The curriculum included “catechism, arithmetic, history, geography, English grammar, spelling, and penmanship” Also emphasized was etiquette, including courtesy, and “correct positions for sitting, walking, and standing, practise [sic] in graceful carriage, bowing, repose of manner, and in the essentials of good breeding.” Girls also received lessons in domestic arts, including knitting, darning, sewing, and cooking. Music and the “cultivation of good reading habits” were

\textsuperscript{18} U.S. Census, Population Schedules, Providence, Rhode Island, 1860. Entry 587/909.

\textsuperscript{19} Sister Mary Loretto O’Connor, R.S.M., A.M. \textit{Merry Marks the Century} (Providence, Rhode Island, Sisters of Mercy, 1951), 118.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 121.
emphasized as curricular activities. The Sisters also established sodalities, societies to inculcate good Catholic piety. In 1855, the cathedral parochial school in Providence had three sodalities for the children: Children of Mary, Angel Guardian, and Infant Jesus.\textsuperscript{21}

With such an auspicious background, the Sisters of Mercy arrived in St. Augustine in the fall of 1859 and settled into a small house on St. George’s Street across from the Cathedral. St. Augustine was a much smaller town than Providence, with a much different type of population. The 1860 census reported a population of 1,175 whites, 67 free blacks, and 672 slaves. The surrounding St. Johns County had 1,953 whites, 82 free blacks, and 1,003 slaves.\textsuperscript{22}

In December, shortly after the arrival of the Sisters, the "Ladies of the Roman Catholic Church" held a fair. The newspaper reported that the proceeds from the event were to be "devoted to the education projects now in movement in this City. A very worthy object which should be cheerfully and faithfully sustained by our people, both Catholic and Protestant."\textsuperscript{23} The Sisters started St. Mary's Academy, a boarding school/day school for white girls, after the first of the year. According to the census, there were eight boarding students who ranged in age from twelve to sixteen years old and were all from Florida. This was the first Catholic convent school in the state.\textsuperscript{24} The 1860 Social Statistics Schedule shows there were two teaching Sisters for fifty students in the female academy (including the boarding students) and two teaching Sisters for seventy-five students in their free school.\textsuperscript{25}

In addition to teaching academic subjects, the Sisters of Mercy also taught the Roman Catholic catechism. Although it was illegal for them to teach slaves basic academic subjects, they were allowed to give them, along with whites, religious instruction. Carroll writes that “Special attention was given to the colored population, and Bishop Verot, who was devoted to

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 121-122.

\textsuperscript{22} Kennedy, Population of the United States in 1860, 54.

\textsuperscript{23} Examiner, December 31, 1859.

\textsuperscript{24} Karen Harvey, St. Augustine and St. Johns County: A Pictorial History (Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Company, 1980), 117.

\textsuperscript{25} U.S. Census, 1860. Social Statistics for St. Johns County, Florida.
the race, greatly valued the zeal of the Sisters in instructing them. Their children learned to sing with spirit several hymns, and the Bishop delighted in hearing them execute their favorite, with more vigor than beauty, in staccato movement.

‘I am a little Catholic,
   And Christian is my name,
   And I believe in the Holy Church
   In every age the same.’”  

The schools for white boys, established by the Christian Brothers Verot brought from Canada in 1859, were important components of the Catholic education available in St. Augustine, the male counterparts of the Sisters of Mercy’s schools for white girls. The Brothers of the Christian Schools was founded in Reims, France, in 1680. The order’s establishment was in keeping with centuries of Catholic policy to teach the young and provide free schools for the poor. There arose in France many petites écoles for the common people.

The Brothers arrived in St. Augustine on September 1, 1859, and moved into a two-story frame building, “a pretty little house” on the west side of Charlotte Street, south of Bridge Street, surrounded by a large garden. It was about five blocks south of the Cathedral. By 1861, the number of boarders increased so much that the Brothers added a wooden wing onto the house.

The 1860 federal census lists five brothers: Brothers Lucien, age 40 (the head of the household, presumably the Superior); Alexander, age 34; Louis, age 35; Stanislas, age 22; and Quinton, age 21. Boarding with the Brothers were six boys, ages 9-15; two were from South Carolina, three from Florida, and one from Maryland. The Brothers had fifty students in their Male Academy (including the six boarders) and sixty-five in their free school for white boys. The curriculum in


the Brothers’ schools included calligraphy and drawing, arithmetic and geography. Etiquette for classes called for little speaking and a maintenance of good order. 29

The education of their white youth was one of the major concerns of the citizens of St. Augustine. In reviewing recent internal improvements of the city, the editors of the Examiner rejoiced over the awakening of an interest in education, and proclaimed, "San Augustine is in a fair way to be celebrated for the plenteousness and excellence of her school privileges, not on a sickly and fluctuating basis, but we hope and believe possessing the very best elements of permanency." 30 A month later, however, the editors gave a totally unexpected strong warning against the establishment of church related schools:

We are however in one danger which indeed should be no danger to lofty and liberal minds. The moment our schools erect fortifications of sect and ism around them, that moment, we honestly believe, they strike the first blow at their own ruin. The school room is not the place to teach religious dogmas; these legitimately belong to the Sunday-schools and the consecrated teachers of religion; the development of the intellect, the training and storing the mind with knowledge, accompanied and hallowed by those mild influences and examples which inculcate practical piety, are the department of the presiding spirits in the school-room. The worth of a school for youth, does not hinge upon the question [illegible] Methodist or Episcopal or Roman Catholic. It hinges upon this rather-- Is it a source of light? is the young mind wisely and successfully trained there? Are those principles formed in it which it will do to guide our life by in after years? Are children taught to revere the majority of broad moral right? Are they fitted for true noble manhood and womanhood? We are opposed in every sense and on every ground to sectarian schools. 31

Bishop Verot was discouraged by this public reaction, but pressed forward with the establishment of the schools and laid the foundations for a new convent building for the Sisters

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30 Examiner, January 7, 1860.

31 Examiner, February 11, 1860.
of Mercy in the fall of the year. Sisters of Mercy chronicler Mother Austin Carroll described the new building:

On the lower floor were five rooms, and a large hall designed for a chapel. Another hall in the shape of an L projected from the rear to which it was joined by an immense arch supported by three square pillars. Parlors and domestic offices were on the ground-floor; on the second were class-rooms, dormitories, and Community room. The official known in conventual parlance as a vigilatrix, had quarters in a cell at the head of the staircase. Everything was well adapted for the duties of the Sisterhood, and the schools were soon full.

The Sisters and students moved into the new facility in August 1861.

In spite of the Examiner’s strong warnings against church-related schools, a little more than a year later, the same editor had almost euphoric praise for the four schools the Catholic Church had established in St. Augustine, i.e., St. Mary's Academy/day school and a free school for white girls, and the Christian Brothers’ academy/day school and free school for white boys:

We have great cause for gratulation when we consider the great progress in the educational system in our city; too much gratitude cannot be felt by the citizens of St. Augustine, to the Catholic Bishop and Priests, under whose auspices the schools connected with that Church have been established, and to the Sisters and Brothers who are engaged in instructing our youth. There is a great work to be done here amongst the Youth of that Church, and none other but the Bishops, Priests, and Teachers of their own faith can so readily reach the heart of the matter, and faithfully they seem to be executing the duty, with untiring energy they devote themselves to this labor of love, for the rates of tuition &c, are put as low as possible, and a large Charity school is also connected with their Institution. Already a marked change is apparent in the deportment of many Boys, who were formerly allowed to run wild about the streets; instead of foolish talking and naughty words, now as you pass along you hear them discoursing of their schools, books or other subjects of improvement and interest. The Girls are under the care of the Sisters, 'tho always remarkable for their good manners, and gentle bearing--have now the added charm of intellectual improvement; one cannot too much admire the gentle courtesy and modesty of their demeanor--much of this is natural to them, but one can also see the effects of careful training; it could scarcely fail

32 Gannon, Rebel Bishop, 29; Austin Carroll, Leaves, 332.

33 Austin Carroll, Leaves, 332.
to be otherwise under the supervision of Ladies so eminent for their piety, and themselves of cultivated minds and manners.34

No explanation is given for this radical change in attitude concerning parochial schools, other than, perhaps, extreme pleasure in the results of the Brothers’ and Sisters’ teaching methods under the guidance of Brother Lucian and Mother Mary Ligouri. All looked well for the schools, but in the same month as the editorial’s publication, the country erupted into Civil War.

The intensity of tensions between the North and South had been building steadily since the Compromise of 1850. Because of the strong anti-Catholicism that was prevalent across the country at mid-century, most Catholic leaders had refrained from political discussions that did not have a direct bearing on the Catholic Church. On January 4, 1861, however, Bishop Verot delivered a sermon at the church in St. Augustine that launched him into the political arena. The occasion was the Day of Public Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer proclaimed by President James Buchanan in a spiritual effort to avert the disintegration of the Union. Verot’s message, “Slavery & Abolitionism,” strongly condemned the North for the widespread practice of refusing to assist in the capture and return of runaway slaves, a rebelliousness that flagrantly violated the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and justified the South’s consideration of secession. The sermon also denounced abolitionists for blasphemously trying to use the Bible to condemn slavery as a “moral evil, and a crime against God, religion, humanity, and society.”35 Verot countered that slavery had “received the sanction of God, of the Church, and of Society at all times, and in all governments,”36 and cited Biblical and historical examples to support his argument. Verot’s defense of slavery and states’ rights was published and widely quoted throughout the South, and gained him the reputation of being a “rebel bishop.”37

34 U.S. Census 1860, Social Statistics for St. Johns County; Examiner, April 6, 1861.


36 Ibid.

37 Gannon, Rebel Bishop, 31.
Verot defined slavery as a “state of dependency of one man upon another ‘so as to be obliged to work all his life for that master with the privilege in the latter, to transfer that right to another person by sale.’” The master, however, did not own the slave, but only had a right to the slave’s labor and that of the slave’s children.38 According to Verot, masters also had responsibilities toward their slaves. Some treated their slaves like animals, but the bishop said,

A man, by being a slave, does not cease to be a man, retaining all the properties, qualities, attributes, duties, rights and responsibilities attached to human nature, or to a being endowed with reason and understanding, and made to the image and likeness of God. A master has not over a slave the same rights which he has over an animal, and whoever would view his slaves merely as beasts, would have virtually abjured human nature, and would deserve to be expelled from human society.39

His sermon also delineated six conditions under which slavery could be considered “legitimate, lawful, approved by all laws, and consistent with practical religion and true holiness of life in masters who fulfil [sic] those conditions:”40 1) repudiate the slave trade, for slaves brought into the country from Africa had not really been captured in war, but were caught and sold as trade items, 2) respect the rights of free colored persons; slavery was not based on color, but on property rights, and it was unjust to re-enslave a free person, 3) do not take advantage of colored females, who were frequently subjected to immorality, 4) honor, respect, and encourage slave marriage and keep families together, 5) provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter, and 6) provide a means for slaves to know and practice religion. To seal these reforms, Verot proposed that the Confederacy adopt a servile code to outline the rights and duties of slaves.41

Verot frankly addressed the immorality some masters forced upon their female slaves: “It is but right that means should be taken to check libertinism and licentiousness, and that the female slave be surrounded with sufficient protection to save her from dishonor and crime. The

38 Ibid., 40.
39 Verot, A Tract for the Times, 15.
40 Ibid., 5.
41 Gannon, Rebel Bishop, 45-48, 52.
Southern Confederacy, if it should exist, must rely on morality and justice, and it could never be entitled to a special protection from above unless it professes to surround Slavery with the guarantees that will secure its morality and virtue.”

Such concern for female slaves and the open admission that the sexual abuse they often suffered was criminal was startling, especially coming from a Southern bishop. It should be noted, however, that Verot also held racist ideas. His emphasis on the need to keep slave families together to avoid sexual immorality was based on the belief that “the strength and violence of animal propensities is in the inverse ratio of intellectual and moral faculties, which are decidedly weaker in the African race, as all persons of experience will testify.”

On January 10, 1861, six days after Verot delivered his sermon, Florida seceded from the Union; and little more than three months later, the Civil War began with the Confederacy’s firing on Fort Sumter. Union troops took possession of St. Augustine on March 10, 1862. So many people fled the city, that the Sisters of Mercy closed St. Mary’s Academy in May, though, “the [local] children continued to come on Sundays for instruction, and the blacks were cared for as usual.” Great uncertainty gripped St. Augustine. There were rumors the city was to be shelled and the convent destroyed. Convinced that the Sisters were in great danger, despite their desire to remain in the Ancient City, Bishop Verot determined to remove them to a safer place. On August 17, 1862, Verot personally conducted seven of the eleven Sisters of Mercy, including Mother Liguori and Mother Agnes, to Columbus, Georgia, at the western edge of his diocese for the duration of the conflict. The four who remained in St. Augustine lived in great poverty, and

43 Ibid., 19.
45 An account of the trip to Columbus, which is described by Michael Gannon as “a pure classic for error and misadventure,” (Gannon, *Rebel Bishop*, 66) is masterfully told by Sister Austin Carroll in *Leaves from the Annals of the Sisters of Mercy in Four Volumes*, 335-344. The Christian Brothers sent their boarders home. With their major source of income gone, they could no longer sustain themselves. On May 1, 1863, they abandoned their house, furnishings and all, never to return. Lucian, *The Brothers of the Christian Schools*, [7, 35, 37-38].
the work that had been going very well before the war suffered a major setback. During the Civil War, Sister Mary Ann, one of the St. Augustine Sisters of Mercy, provided nursing care at the Savannah Hospital, and at the prison camp at Andersonville after the Battle of Olustee. The battle, the largest confrontation in Florida during the war, took place near Lake City, a community west of Jacksonville, in February 1864.

The Bishop and Sisters arrived in Columbus on September 4, 1862. In spite of Verot’s best intentions, Columbus failed to provide the safe haven he had anticipated. The winters were much colder than they had been in St. Augustine, and the Sisters suffered from a lack of fuel and food. Breakfasts consisted of one slice of cornbread for each one, two spoonfuls of hominy, and tea made from blackberry leaves or coffee made from parched corn without milk or sugar. The midday meal often included beef with a little rice or a few sweet potatoes, and suppers were cornmeal gruel or buttermilk, or sometimes nothing. Sleeping accommodations were nearly non-existent; two Sisters shared a quilt, and others slept on the floor, until a friend gave them some dry goods boxes to use as beds. For shoes, the Sisters saved one special pair each to wear to Mass. Otherwise, they “made slippers of any stuff they could get, with thick paper soles. “ One day they were given a box of shoes that were made by slaves. “They took any sizes they could get; as none fitted there was little choice; one Sister who wore twos was glad to get into sevens, but the noise she made walking, flip-flap, was intolerable.” Somehow, they managed to piece together their habits that were falling apart, or replaced them with cotton habits dyed black, as no serge was available.

If such conditions were not bad enough, federal troops descended upon Columbus on April 16, 1865, Easter Day, intent on taking the Confederate-held bridge that crossed the Chattahoochee River. Some women and children sought refuge at the convent. “All night long the Sisters remained in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, disturbed by the yells and shouts of


the victors, and the groans and cries of the vanquished.” Unaware that the Confederacy had surrendered on April 9, the Union soldiers were given permission to rampage through the little city for the next three days, pillaging and destroying it, leaving nothing for its inhabitants. In the aftermath, bartering was the only means of exchange until the winter. The Sisters re-opened their schools, but soon closed them as they needed to tend to other needs in the miserable community where “every one [sic] was in trouble; poverty, suffering, bereavement were everywhere.”

With war’s end, some of the Sisters of Mercy remained at the Columbus house established in 1862, while others returned to St. Augustine, where St. Mary’s Academy resumed its place as the favored institution dedicated to the education of the Ancient City’s white girls to make them refined young women. According to their advertisements in the Examiner in 1866, the Sisters of Mercy offered a full course of instruction for young ladies that would meet these expectations, which included reading; writing; grammar; orthography (spelling); arithmetic; geography; history; rhetoric; natural philosophy; algebra; geometry; chemistry; astronomy; French, German, and Spanish languages; music, vocal and instrumental; drawing; and plain or ornamental needlework.50 Tuition for boarders was four hundred dollars a year, with extra charges for instruction in the foreign languages, art and music. Needlework was offered free of charge to the boarders.

As a parochial school, the curriculum was steeped in strong Catholic teaching. The basic goal of Catholic schools was to "fortify the soul with Christian education" by "training the intellect and memory in truth, teaching the heart and will--which are the springs of moral action--to obey the dictates of conscience and thus acquire virtue, and enlightening and controlling the conscience by the sanction of religion, so as to make it an effective guide to conduct." In

49 Ibid. 347-351.

50 Examiner, November 10, 1866.
addition to academic training, therefore, there would have been daily prayers and religious
instruction.\(^{51}\)

The excellent reputation of the Academy was reflected in a report that appeared in the
*Examiner* in the fall of 1868. Bishop Verot had gone to the North and returned with three new
Sisters of Mercy to join the faculty at St. Mary's. According to the paper, the Sisters "yielding to
motives of zeal and feeling the impulse of the missionary spirit, . . . cheerfully renounced the
comforts, blandishments and advantages of home and changed them with the sacrifice, privations
and comparative poverty of a country lately desolated by evil disaster and war." Speaking of
their work at the Academy, the paper continued,

> They have already commenced to teach the young daughters of the 'Ancient City'
in St. Mary's Academy, which has now been in existence for ten years and earned
a just reputation throughout Florida for the solid and accomplished education
which it gives to young ladies. With the addition of these three new members, the
school cannot fail to become more prosperous; doubtless it will sustain its
reputation of a first class school for young ladies, and we hope it will draw large
numbers of young ladies from the county and neighboring cities.

The editors strongly encouraged parents to send their daughters as boarding students, claiming
that they would "receive more fully all the benefits of the Institution," and pointing out what a
bargain it was at only two hundred dollars a year, half of the pre-war rates.\(^{52}\)

The Academy did have to compete with other schools that advertised in the *Examiner*:
Mrs. M.M. Reid's Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies in Palatka, Florida, and the Bay
Side Seminary, A Home School for Young Ladies, in Oyster Bay, Long Island, New York. A
citizen identified only as Observer, wrote the editor of the *Examiner* in 1867, extolling the work
of the Sisters of Mercy: "... we willingly take this opportunity of congratulating with our fellow
citizens of St. Augustine and the country around for the good opportunity they enjoy of giving a
thorough, classical scientific and above all genteel and moral education to their daughters." The
Observer thought "it was a very superfluous and rather dangerous experiment to send those

\(^{51}\) Sister Mary Alberta, S.S.J., “A Study of the Schools Conducted by the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of St.
Augustine, Florida, 1866-1940” (Master’s thesis, University of Florida, 1940), 49.

\(^{52}\) *Examiner*, October 17, 1868. St. Mary's Academy was established in 1859, nine years before.
young plants of the South to Northern latitudes in the hostile soil, with so good and substantial opportunities of a good education at home.”

Such accolades regarding St. Mary's Academy were common in the *Examiner*.

Another laudatory remark regarding St. Mary's Academy commented that the Sisters had succeeded in making the girls not only graceful but also intellectual. A review of other comments about the academy, however, demonstrates that special appreciation was accorded the training the girls received in the finer arts and skills, such as needlework and other handiwork. The prevailing attitudes toward what were suitable activities for young ladies were represented in the *Examiner* in an article entitled, "Woman's Scepter, the Needle," in which the writer asserted,

> There is something extremely pleasant; and even touching . . . if very sweet, soft and winning effect -- in this peculiarity of needle work, distinguishing woman form [sic] man. Our own sex is incapable of any such by play, aside from the business of life; but women . . . have always some handiwork ready to fill the tiny gap of every vacant moment. . . . a needle is familiar to the finger of them all . . . and they have greatly the advantage of us in this respect. The slender thread of silk or cotton keeps them united with the small, familiar, gentle interests of life. . . . Methinks it is a token of healthy and gentle characteristic when women of high thought and accomplishments love to sew. . . .

With the education of the white Catholic girls so well in hand, Bishop Verot turned his attentions toward educating the newly freed slaves. The addition of this new field of labor, however, was too much to ask of the Sisters of Mercy. It was difficult to recruit new Sisters; St. Augustine, though not destroyed by the war, was impoverished; and the Sisters of Mercy were now divided between St. Augustine and Columbus, separated by hundreds of nearly impassable miles. Under such straitened circumstances, it was impossible for the Sisters of Mercy to

53 Ibid., August 17, 1867.

54 Ibid., July 6, 1867.

55 Ibid., November 3, 1866.
continue with their teaching and catechizing and assume the added burden of establishing schools for the freedmen.\textsuperscript{56} Verot, therefore, looked for others to take on the task.

\textsuperscript{56} Sister M. Aquin McEervey, History of the “Macon” Novitiate, Mount De Sales Academy. Copy in ASSJSA, 301.2. Pasted in back of Record Book.
Figure 1. Bishop Augustine Verot. From McGoldrick, Beyond the Call. Used with permission.
Figure 2. Sisters of Mercy’s St. Mary’s Convent, St. Augustine. Courtesy State Archives of Florida. Used with permission.
CHAPTER TWO

“NOTRE CHÈRE MISSION D’AMÉRIQUE:” THE FRENCH SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH’S MISSION IN FLORIDA

In June 1865, Verot went to Le Puy-en-Velay (Le Puy), France, his home town, to recruit additional Sisters to teach the freedmen and to instill in them a strong Catholic faith. Le Puy, itself an ancient city, dates from at least 420 A.D., when a church was built there. Le Puy’s great Notre-Dame Cathedral dates from the 10th century, and the present city was built around it. The city is located in the heart of the Massif Central, a “huge rugged plateau of granite, filled with isolated valleys,” about 2,000 feet above sea level. It is the “remote core of France.” Winters are quite harsh and heavy snows often make the roads impassable. Summers, however, are mild, with temperatures ranging from the low fifties to low seventies.

Le Puy is the seat of government for Haute-Loire, one of the departments created by the National Assembly in 1790. Because of the harsh winter climate, rugged terrain, and isolation, the Haute-Loire saw the “relatively slow penetration of modern techniques on a population that was not hostile to progress, but admitted it with a certain hesitation.” The region, and Le Puy in particular, was known for its strong religious life. The Diocese of Puy “has a missionary tradition: many children of Haute-Loire entered religious orders and notably the Society of Foreign Missions and the Society of Jesus. Many associations of piety there, persecuted during the French Revolution, were reconstituted there soon after the Revolution ended” [my translation].

Among the many women’s religious orders in Le Puy, was the Sisters of St. Joseph, founded there in 1650 and refounded all over France in 1807. One of the primary ministries of

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these Sisters was to teach in the public schools. It was to these Sisters of St. Joseph that Bishop Verot went in mid-July 1865, seeking teachers. He made it clear that they were to instruct newly liberated slaves in Florida and Georgia, saying, “I have five or six hundred thousand [sic] Negroes without any education or religion . . . for whom I wish to do something.”

He was compelled not only by genuine concern for the “Negroes,” but also by the Florida legislature’s recent action to provide schools for blacks and by the efforts already in place by Protestant teachers from the North. In explaining the urgent need for teachers, he told his French audience, “we must make a beginning by establishing schools -- a necessity. The [northern] Protestants have anticipated us here: they have opened free schools which the Negroes attend in great numbers. . . . We must, therefore, prepare for the contest . . . in procuring religious instruction for this simple and docile race. . . .”

The work of the Protestant missionaries in competition with the Catholic efforts in St. Augustine is the subject of the next chapter.

Of the sixty Sisters from Haute-Loire who volunteered, eight were chosen from throughout the department. The oldest and the one appointed Mother Superior for the colony in Florida was Sister Marie Sidonie Rascle, age 40. She had taught in Le Puy’s convent school for twenty years and was especially gifted in working with younger students, well liked by both her charges and their parents. Mother Sidonie was accompanied by two other seasoned Sisters, Marie Julie Roussel (Roussell), age 41, and Joséphine Deleage, age 36. The remaining five members of the chosen eight were all second year novices who had made their first vows on July 19, 1866, about two weeks before they set out for Florida. While the three older Sisters provided steady guidance, the newly minted Sisters were sought for their enthusiastic and adventuresome spirits. Sister St. Pierre Borie, age 28, was one of the first to volunteer for the Florida missions.

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The others were: Sister Clémence Freycenon, age 26; Sister Julie Clotilde Arsac, age 24; Sister Marie Célenie Joubert, age 22, and Sister Marie Joseph Cortial, age 21.\(^7\)

On the day the Sisters were to depart for America, the little company was blessed and exhorted by the Bishop of Le Puy, and after a last Eucharist in the convent chapel, departed for their mission in “Floride.” The missionaries were the first ever sent out from the Le Puy community of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and the only Catholic religious ever specifically charged to minister to the former slaves in America. They were accompanied part way by their Mother General Léocadie Broc and Mother Agathe, the Mistress of Novices, to Paris and then on to Le Havre,\(^8\) where the Sisters boarded a steamer bound for New York City on August 2.\(^9\) Sister Julie Roussel wrote the Le Puy community the next day, describing the parting:

> After we had given them our last farewells, through a few signals which we were interrupting in order to wipe our tears, we soon took courage; gaiety showed on all the faces again, and it no longer disappeared, . . . our hearts are not indifferent on seeing the ship carry us so far from those whom we cherish; however, we are pleased to have made the first step, and if it were still to be done, we would not hesitate a moment.\(^10\)

The voyage lasted nearly three weeks. Although most of them suffered from seasickness, the trip gave them an opportunity to adjust to aspects of the new culture they were about to enter. During that time they were “agreeably surprised to find waiters and other help were negroes, as they had come to teach them, but having never seen them before they were pleased to have the opportunity of observing the negroes unnoticed.” They particularly liked the blacks’ soft voices and polite manners.\(^11\) They also were exposed to Americans, most of whom were Protestants,

\(^7\) Table created by Sr. Louis Marie Briat, Archivist, Sisters of St. Joseph in Le Puy, ASSJLP and copy on file at the Archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine, St. Augustine, Florida. Hereafter cited as ASSJSA.

\(^8\) Letter #10, Mtr. Sidonie Rascle to Rev. Mtr. Léocadie Broc, September 14, 1866, ASSJSA.

\(^9\) Letter #1, Mtr. Sidonie Rascle to Rev. Mtr. Léocadie Broc, August 2-3, 1866, ASSJSA. Coincidentally, the steamer was the *Lafayette*, named for the French hero of the American Revolution who was born near Le Puy.

\(^10\) Letter #2, Sr. Julie Roussel to Le Puy Community, August 4, 1866, ASSJSA.

for the first time. Sister Julie Roussel’s description of the Americans onboard reveals not only her impressions of them, but also gives a taste of her dry sense of humor: “Each time we went to table we could hardly wait to leave the dining room so we could laugh freely. The Americans in their turn must laugh at us if, however, they are capable of unbending a bit. What a serious race! They would make good religious, at least silence would cost them very little.”12 Aware of the anti-Catholicism of many Americans, the Sisters had debated whether to wear their habits on the trip. The decision to don them proved a good one, for because of them they were met with curiosity rather than hostility, and treated with great respect rather than derision.13

In New York, the Sisters were met by three Florida priests who then traveled with them to Savannah. While there, the Sisters stayed with Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy.14 Bishop Verot, from his house in Savannah, wrote to the Bishop of Le Puy:

It is an indescribable pleasure for me to report that the good daughters, or rather the glorious heroines of your diocese, arrived in Savannah, after many days, all in good health, and with an admirable enthusiasm to consecrate themselves to the service of the poor black people, of whom they have already seen a large number. . . . I hope the good God will give them His blessing, and that the Blacks will run to them in crowds to be instructed. It will be necessary to open an orphanage for the young black boys and girls [in Savannah]; that will be the means of doing much good. Unfortunately, the black people are poor, and that enterprise will entail much expense; but Providence never is lacking toward its children, and I

12 Letter #7, Sr. Julie Roussel, Savannah to her family, August 31, 1866, ASSJSA.
13 Letter #6, Sr. Julie Roussel to Rev. Mtr., August 23, 1866, ASSJSA.
14 Mother Sidonie explained to Mother Agathe in Le Puy that the Sisters in Savannah were not from the same order as the Sisters of Mercy in St. Augustine, whose founder was Catherine McAuley. Mtr. Sidonie, St. Augustine, to Mtr Agathe, Le Puy, November 27, 1866, ASSJSA The Sisters in Savannah were actually the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy, an order created in Charleston by Bishop England in 1829 “to educate females of the middling class of society; also to have a school for free colored girls and to give religious instruction to female slaves’ and to care for the sick.” One Faith, One Family: The Diocese of Savannah, 1850-2000, compiled by Gillian Brown et al, (Savannah: Diocese of Savannah, Georgia, 2000), p. 27. They are not to be confused with the Sisters of Mercy founded by Catherine McAuley in Ireland in 1831. At the suggestion of Rome, the Savannah Sisters of Mercy adopted the Constitution and habit of the McAuley Sisters of Mercy in 1892. “The Mother McAuley Sisters of Mercy,” page 4. Typescript on file in the Sisters of Mercy Archives, Macon, Georgia.
foresee that already in a short time I will have to request from Your Excellency another colony of Missionaries in veils.\textsuperscript{15}

Just over a month later, Bishop Verot attended the Second Plenary Council of Catholic bishops in Baltimore, from October 7-21, 1866. The pastoral letter issued by the bishops after the council strongly addressed the Church’s responsibility to provide ministries to the newly freed slaves: “We must all feel, . . ., that in some manner a new and more extensive field of charity and devotedness has been open to us by the emancipation of the immense slave population of the South. . . . We urge upon the clergy and people of our charge the most generous co-operation . . . to extend to them that Christian education and moral restraint which they so much stand in need of.” Shortly thereafter the newly founded Fathers of the Society of St. Joseph [Josephite Fathers] were designated to serve blacks in the United States.\textsuperscript{16} Thus, the Sister of St. Joseph’s mission was in keeping with the goals of the Roman Catholic Church in America.

On September 2, 1866, the eight French Sisters of St. Joseph arrived in St. Augustine, a tiny town compared to Le Puy, located on the east coast of Florida, barely five feet above sea level. Aside from its European flavor, it was a place vastly different from Le Puy. At first, they stayed with the Sisters of Mercy, who warmly welcomed them.

The Mother Superior for the Mercy Sisters was then Sister Aloysius, Mother Liguori having transferred elsewhere after the Civil War. Bishop Verot’s diary records the personnel changes:

Feb 1866. . . . During my visitation of the convents of Columbus and St. Augustine, I perceived it was necessary to change the superioress, and having asked from Mother Bernard of Hartford, Ct., I obtained Sister Bonaventura, whom I appointed Mother and who went to Columbus to govern the community. The former superioress, Mother Liguori, left St. Augustine with Mother Agnes and Sister Frances. I appointed Sister Aloysius to govern the house of St.

\textsuperscript{15} Letter #8, Bishop Verot, Savannah, to Bishop Le Breton, Bishop of Le Puy, September 3, 1866. Mother Sidonie Rasle wrote Mother Léocadie on September 14, 1866, that the plans to leave four Sisters of St. Joseph in Savannah to open the orphanage for small colored girls had to be postponed because the Sisters did not yet speak English well enough, a handicap that would be vexing to all of them and Bishop Verot in their first year.

\textsuperscript{16} Miriam T. Murphy, “Catholic Missionary Work Among the Colored People of the United States, 1776-1866, \emph{Records of the American Catholic Historical Society}, Vol. XXXV, No. 2 (June, 1924), 127.
Augustine and letters reached me that the houses of Columbus and Augustine have peace and do very well.\(^{17}\)

A series of articles about the Sisters of Mercy published in 1925 sheds a little more light on what prompted Mother Liguori’s departure:

The Convent in St. Augustine was again opened, but two small convents under one Superior and so far distant from each other could not function satisfactorily. The exigencies of the times, the paralysis of all industries caused by the war; the restrictions placed on the South by the Federal Government made life from day to day one long anxiety. In 1866, Mother Liguori returned North with her sister Mother Agnes, whose health had become greatly impaired. \(^{18}\)

For several months the Sisters of St. Joseph stayed at the Mercy Sisters’ old convent located next to the new Mercy convent, the one completed in August 1861. During their first week there, the Sisters of Mercy sent meals over to the Sisters of St. Joseph and the two communities shared their daily recreational periods in a garden between the two houses. \(^{19}\)

The arrangement worked very well. Mother Sidonie wrote:

The good Sisters of Mercy are perfect to us, and we are anything but perfect; we do not even know how to say “Thank you.” Happily for us there is a French aspirant whom Bishop Verot brought from Paris seven years ago; she is 50 years old. She teaches piano and French. Miss Laura de Bertheville is therefore our interpreter; and [when] we cannot understand our excellent and holy little Sister Aloysia, Superior, we go to our “mouth-piece.”\(^{20}\)


\(^{19}\) Letter #7, Sr. Julie Roussel, Savannah, to her family in France, August 31, 1866, ASSJSA.

\(^{20}\) Letter #10, Mtr. Sidonie Rascle, St. Augustine, to Rev. Mtr. Léocadie Broc, Le Puy, September 14, 1866, ASSJSA.
The Sisters of St. Joseph hoped to set up their own household, but without the necessary provisions yet in hand, it seemed good to continue on with the Sisters of Mercy. They consulted with Father Aubril, the Mercies’ chaplain, and decided to stay longer, sharing expenses, including that of hiring a black woman to assist the lay Sisters who performed housekeeping chores. Sister Mary Ann, a lay Sister of Mercy, did the laundry for both communities. Under the new arrangement the Sisters of St. Joseph ate with the Mercy Sisters. It was customary for religious to listen to readings during meals, rather than conversing. The readings in English that the Sisters of St. Joseph heard and their conversations with the American Sisters of Mercy during the recreational periods greatly facilitated the French Sisters’ acquisition of English, though that remained a daunting task. Mother Sidonie continued: “We find ourselves perfectly at ease with those good religious. What a wholesome spirit in this country. When we asked to take our meals with the community, we were already sure our suggestion would be accepted. Miss Laura told us that Sister Superior would be happy to make one community with us.” Indeed, the two communities worked so well together that Mother Sidonie reported to her superiors in France, “We are almost Sisters of Mercy.” Sisters Josephine and Marie Joseph assisted the Mercy Sisters by teaching a class for the novices for three days, while Sister Celenie tended to the sick, Sisters Clemence and Clotilde helped in the kitchen, and Sister St. Pierre swept the chapel and refectory (dining room). Sister Josephine DeLeage shared the enthusiasm toward the Sisters of Mercy when she wrote Mother Léocadie, “In St. Augustine the [Mercy Sisters] are few [there were only four of them] which does not follow for their fervor; the Superior seems an angel in church. How edifying she is to me! How she confounds me! We are sharing in spiritual rapport.”

21 Letter #16, Mtr. Sidonie Rascle, St. Augustine, to Rev. Mtr. Léocadie Broc, Le Puy, November 5, 1866, ASSJSA.

22 Letter #10, Mtr. Sidonie Rascle, St. Augustine, to Rev. Mtr. Léocadie Broc, Le Puy, September 14, 1866, ASSJSA.

23 Letter #15, Mtr. Sidonie Rascle, St. Augustine to Rev. Mtr. Léocadie Broc, Le Puy, October 12, 1866, ASSJSA.

24 Letter #12, Sr. Josephine DeLeage, St. Augustine, to Mtr. Léocadie Broc, Le Puy, September 15, 1866, ASSJSA.
In addition to helping the Sisters of St. Joseph with their English, the Sisters of Mercy introduced them to the blacks of St. Augustine, the object of their mission. The Sisters of Mercy, in addition to running the schools for whites, had also been instructing blacks in the Catholic faith. Every Thursday night, black women in the Society of St. Monica, a sodality, a sort of “club” for encouraging Catholic piety, met at the convent, where Sister Aloysia taught them the catechism. On Friday nights, girls in the Society of Holy Angels met there. The best students were awarded with a large white ribbon, worn like a scarf, with a medal at the shoulder.

As the cooler months approached, Mother Aloysius took Mother Sidonie with her to visit a black man who was sick with swollen feet, and so impoverished that he had no fire to ward off the cold. Mother Sidonie wrote of the visit as her “apprenticeship,” saying, “I wish, my dear Sisters, you could have seen the emaciation of the hands and face of that man; what an effect it made with that black skin! And yet, under that sad exterior what a beautiful soul! What resignation in his poverty, in the length of his sufferings.” After Mother Aloysius encouraged him and prayed for him, he addressed Mother Sidonie, saying, “French Sister, thank you for your visit, pray for me.” Mother Sidonie was greatly touched and declared in her letter, “Oh, how happy I will be when I am able to speak comfortably in English, and to go to my good black people, to tell them about how great is the goodness of God toward His children!!” Her reference to the black man’s soul is significant. One of Bishop Verot’s convictions in caring for the blacks under his charge was that “negroes” did, indeed, have souls. He made his most public argument in support of the former slaves’ full humanity and possession of souls when he addressed the Vatican Council that began December 8, 1869 and continued until July 1870, when it was interrupted by the Franco-Prussian War. His long argument before the assembly can be summarized by his statement, “But especially do we condemn the inept error of those who dare to assert that Negroes do not belong to the human family, or that they are not endowed with spiritual and immortal souls.”

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25 Letter #14, Mtr. Sidonie Rascle, St. Augustine, to Mr. Bonhomme, Le Puy, September 21, 1866, ASSJSA.

26 Letter #23, Mtr. Sidonie Rascle, St. Augustine, to the Sisters of St. Joseph in France, December 1, 1866, ASSJSA.

27 Gannon, Rebel Bishop, 206.
by the other Sisters in describing their work with blacks, shows how Verot had imbued them with a love for the former slaves and how ready they were to embrace the poor freedmen they had come to serve.

Although the Sisters of St. Joseph desired to move on into their own ministries to the freedmen, there was great contentment in working with the Sisters of Mercy. Apparently Father Aubril, the Mercy Sisters’ chaplain, had even devised plans for joining the two communities, but it was not to be. A month later, the Sisters of St. Joseph left to be on their own. The Sisters of Mercy were in tears. Mother Sidonie wrote, “We had a visit today from the Sisters of Mercy; they cried, poor Sisters; I pity them! They are not numerous enough . . . How troubled I was those days to have nothing to give those good religious and to those [Sisters of Mercy] who did so much for us.” Even though they had separated, the Sisters of St. Joseph continued to help the Sisters of Mercy by teaching their students French.

The Sisters of St. Joseph progressed in their work, but were still greatly hampered by their inability to speak English well, a handicap that would be vexing to all of them and Bishop Verot in their first year. In November, however, six new postulants from Savannah, some of whom were Americans, helped them overcome the language barrier, and the Sisters opened a school for black children in St. Augustine. According to the biography of Mother Sidonie, the black children were “proud of being taught by French Sisters, whom the people [of St. Augustine] despised on that account.” In February 1867, Mother Sidonie was able to send five Sisters to establish a similar school in Savannah. Sister Julie Roussel was the Superior, and the teachers were Sisters Josephine and Marie Joseph; Sisters St. John and St. Paul, both new novices, were also part of the faculty. They taught out of a “rickety frame building on the grounds of St. John’s Cathedral.”

28 Letter #24, Sr. Joséphine Deleage, St. Augustine, to Mtr. Léocadie Broc, December 1, 1866, ASSJSA.

29 Letter #35, Mtr. Sidonie Rascle, St. Augustine, to Mtr. Léocadie Broc, Le Puy, January 1, 1867, ASSJSA.


As in St. Augustine, most of the white citizens of Savannah were unhappy at having a school for blacks and did not welcome the Sisters, some referring to them as “nigger Sisters.” Bishop Verot’s announcement of the school’s opening was met with “whispering of disapproval” throughout the congregation. Even so, the school opened with fifty students and went on to provide night classes for adults. In October, four more Sisters arrived, and Mother Julie returned to St. Augustine with three new Sisters. Back in the Ancient City, they also established a school for white boys.

If the whites of St. Augustine at first looked askance at the Sisters, Mother Sidonie was not very well impressed with the Americans either. She wrote:

St. Augustine is an extremely poor country; they are very lazy here; there is no commerce, no industry. Culture is entirely neglected. They bring in grain from Savannah or New York . . . also everything is for a crazy price. . . . The people of St. Augustine live almost like patriarchs of old. Each one bakes bread; each one does care for his house, each cultivates his garden, then strolls along the riverside. The poor go fishing everyday to seek their nourishment for the next day. If fishing is good, they eat; if they are not successful, they patiently wait for the following day; they never have provisions on hand. One lives from day to day; they are perfectly detached from life; they die; very well !!!!”

Of the blacks, however, she wrote:

Except for a few families, the negroes [sic] are almost as well off as the white people; the latter were accustomed to being served before the abolition of slavery and they cannot be reconciled to work; the black people were their bread winners, while these freed men now work for themselves zealously. With them they have everything to gain; . . . These poor people are despised; they are allowed to have nothing to do with white people except to serve them.

Within a year, the Sisters of St. Joseph were well established in their St. Augustine schools. Although there was some initial opposition to the work of the Sisters with African Americans, St. Augustine soon embraced the French nuns. In August of 1867, a citizen

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32 Ibid.
33 Letter #26, Mtr. Sidonie Rascle, St.Augustine, to Sr. Louis Gonzaga Bache, Assistant, n.p., December 3, 1866, ASSJSA.
34 Letter #15, Mtr. Sidonie Rascle, St. Augustine, to Rev. Mtr. Léocadie Broc, Le Puy, October 12, 1866, ASSJSA.
commented on their work among the freedmen: “We hear . . . that the Sisters of St. Joseph have met with success in training the coloured children of St. Augustine. . . . [W]e cannot give too much praise to these devoted Sisters of St. Joseph, for having left their happy country and all the comforts of ‘la Belle France’ to assist in the great work of the moral regeneration of the African race.” The fact that the Sisters came from France placed them at a great advantage in the larger, more prosperous city of Savannah also. Sister Julie Roussel wrote:

> You would not believe the honor which Americans extend to our beautiful France. I think they look on her as queen of all the countries in the universe. Everything that is perfect in goodness, beauty, stability, and even holiness comes from France. A family which is sufficiently comfortable to have a regular servant would not want to admit the servant was not French; a ball gown that does not come from Paris is nothing; the sardines of which they are so fond here, are not good if one does not read on the little tin box the name of our French towns, of Lorient above all.

The Sisters in general expressed great satisfaction with their work. They were appalled at the African Americans’ need for good Catholic instruction. Mother Sidonie wrote to the bishop in Le Puy, that the black children who they taught were “among the most profoundly ignorant,” especially concerning religion, not even knowing how to make the sign of the cross. The “negroes” had great desire to learn, and were particularly attracted to singing and “learn[ed] airs with amazing ease.” The Sisters seemed to concentrate on religious instruction, but also taught them the basic A, B, Cs and arithmetic.

Most of the Sisters expressed great warmth and love for their new black charges. Sr. St. Pierre, for example, wrote she had “no regrets from leaving our dear France,” and that she was “happy to have been chosen for such beautiful work.” She looked forward to teaching the black children, and later was assigned to teach girls. Sr. Célene Joubert, who taught small children with Mother Sidonie, wrote “I have one desire only, that is to become useful and to procure the

35 *St. Augustine Examiner*, August 17, 1867.
36 Letter #51, Sr. Marie Julie Roussel, Savannah, to Sisters in Le Puy, July 5, 1867, ASSJSA.
37 Letter #88, Mtr. Sidonie Rascle, St. Augustine, to the Bishop [of Le Puy], December 10, 1867, ASSJSA.
38 Letter #18, Sr. St. Pierre Borie, St. Augustine, to Rev. Mtr. Léocadie Broc, November 25, 1866, ASSJSA.
glory of the good God by teaching His poor little blacks whom I already love and am attracted to although they may be very unhandsome; but they have a soul created in the image of God!!”

Such expressions were typical of most of the Sisters. Some, however, had to overcome negative feelings. For example, Sister Lazarus L’hostal, who had just arrived from Le Puy in December 1867, wrote about her first impressions:

I must tell you, good Mother, the pain I felt seeing the black people. The day after our arrival in Savannah, we went into the classes; when I saw all those black faces, where only eyes and teeth show white, I couldn’t look at them; I didn’t go near them; I was afraid of them; we stayed there almost a half quarter hour [?] and I was anxious to leave those classes; and I asked myself how would I ever teach class; I felt such repugnance it seemed that would be what I would have the most trouble about, then I consoled myself thinking that as yet I didn’t have to begin, and I would have the time to get used to them; and already I fear them less . . .”

Sister Lazarus did, indeed, overcome her aversions, and loved the 45 black girls she later taught. She eventually became the Local Superior and Provincial Superior in St. Augustine.

Suffering was considered part of the missionary experience. Sister Julie Clotilde, however, wrote in November 1866, “suffering seen from a distance [has] much attraction, but near at hand it is not so easy, but this still does not give a moment of regret; I have not come to have what I would like thus I am not disturbed to have to suffer.” Indeed, suffering was expected, perhaps even anticipated, for as Mother Sidonie wrote, “If we had nothing to suffer, we would not be true missionaries.”

They were not disappointed. Physically, they endured poor food, long hours, heat and humidity, and attacks from mosquitoes. Emotionally, they suffered from the strain of teaching students who were despised by the general population; their

39 Letter #28, Sr. Célenie Joubert, St. Augustine, to Rev. Mtr. Léocadie Broc, Le Puy, December 3, 1866, ASSJSA.
40 Letter #84, Sr. Lazarre Lostal [sic], St. Augustine, to Sr. Marie de Sales, Le Puy, June 18, 1870, ASSJSA; “Sœur Lazare,” Notices Nécrologiques des Soeurs de St. Joseph de 1912 à 1942, p. 6. Original at ASSJLP.
41 Letter #16, Sr. Julie Clotilde, St. Augustine, to Mtr. Léocadie Broc, Le Puy, November 18, 1866, ASSJSA.
42 Letter #15, Mtr. Sidonie Rascle, St. Augustine, to Rev. Mtr. Léocadie Broc, Le Puy, October 12, 1866, ASSJSA.
initial difficulties in speaking English, that “villainous language;” and the strain of being so far from all that was comfortable, familiar, and secure. Teaching, itself, could also be quite trying. Sister Julie Clotilde confessed in a letter to Mother Agathe, “I often think of what you said, that the mistake of young teachers is to scold too much; however, I am driven to that sad necessity. I am almost always with students; in the day with ‘the girls,’ the evenings with ‘the Women;’ just the same I am content in spite of my little troubles; but I need patience . . . .” Her sufferings culminated in July of the next year, when she died of typhoid.

The first death in the little community, however, was the death of their youngest member, Sister Marie Joseph Cortial, who died from tuberculosis in March 1868. Mother Sidonie’s account of her death shows the devotion felt by her black neighbors:

There was a dispute at the parish Church about the question of decorating the catafalque of our poor Sister! The ladies of the City, who are in charge of decorating the church were preparing to do it in their best manner; but Marie Pappet, the head of the black women, opposed them about it; she said to those ladies: “Sister Marie Joseph came for us and not for you, ladies, so it is right for us to take charge of her funeral, and we are the ones who will walk first in the procession; . . .”

Marie Pappet prevailed, and blacks led the impressive procession. Sister Bertrand continued:

That dear Marie did very well; she put out all the lights and candles she could find in the church and at the Mercy Convent; (that woman has “white feet” although her skin is black). When I wanted to know how much I owed her for the candles she answered: “There is no question of that! The preacher said it well; you have made enough sacrifices for us; the church can very well furnish the lights in this circumstance,” and she wiped her eyes with her shawl; then she added: “The whites were upset because we were first in the procession; but it was only just. Sister Marie Joseph was first a teacher of the black children.” That word “first” flatters them. They believe they were honored in the procession; since that day they feel ennobled.45

43 Letter #7, Sr. Julie Roussel, St. Augustine, to her family in France, August 31, 1866, ASSJSA.
44 Letter #47, Sr. Marie Clotilde Arsac, St. Augustine, to Mtr. Agatha Deschayieux, Le Puy, May 11, 1867, ASSJSA.
45 Letter #8, Second Set of Letters, Mtr. Sidonie Rascle, St. Augustine, to Rev. Mother, Le Puy, March 24, 1868, ASSJSA.
With such a strong relationship established with the black community, the Sisters were able to work effectively in St. Augustine.

In addition to teaching the black children, the Sisters also taught classes for adults in the evenings. The women met on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays; the men met on Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays; and everyone met together on Wednesdays. Mother Sidonie described the mid-week meeting:

After Wednesday session we have Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel; all sing -- men, women, postulants, and Sisters . . . Black people learn the melodies easily and sing well. How I love to hear God’s praises sung by all these poor people. Young and old shout, sing with all their heart and soul. How much good we could do among these poor people if we knew how to speak [English] and above all if we were true apostles.46

In their letters, the Sisters often commented on blacks’ love of singing, and how useful it was in teaching them. Another useful tool was the establishment of sodalities for the children as well as adults. The Sisters of St. Joseph continued the sodalities established by the Sisters of Mercy, the Societies of St. Monica for black women, Holy Angels for black girls, and St. Joseph for young black boys. They also established some new ones, St. Frances of Rome and the Ladies of the Sacred Heart in St. Augustine. The latter was composed of the mothers of the black families. The group had about forty-eight members who met monthly at the convent and discussed ways to assist the poor and sick. They took up small collections for the needy, and members would sit up with the sick through the night as needed.47 Such groups met monthly or weekly and took part in services on feast days and in special ceremonies with much pageantry enlivened with official badges and colorful banners and sashes distinctive to each society.48

The loving partnership between the Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of St. Joseph continued for two years. By August 1869, however, it had become clear that the Sisters of Mercy were too

46 Letter #38, Mtr. Sidonie Rascle, St. Augustine, to Rev. Mtr. Léocadie Broc, Le Puy, February 17, 1867, ASSJSA.
47 Letter #41, Tome II, Mtr. Stanislas, St. Augustine, to Mtr. Léocadie Broc, Le Puy, August 5, 1873, ASSJSA.
48 Letter #39, Sr. Marie Julie Roussel, St. Augustine, to Community in Le Puy, January 6, 1873 and Letter #14, Mtr. Sidonie Rascle, St. Augustine, to the Community in Le Puy, September 20, 1866, ASSJSA.
small in number to sustain their ministries in St. Augustine. After much discussion and fervent prayer, the Sisters of Mercy regretfully decided they would have to give up their work in the Ancient City. The decision was final after the Vicariate Apostolic of Florida, attached to the Diocese of Savannah, was erected as a separate Diocese of St. Augustine on March 11, 1870. Bishop Verot, who had been the Bishop of Savannah since July 14, 1861, was given the choice of maintaining his bishopric in Savannah or leading the new Florida diocese. He chose to stay in St. Augustine, and the Right Reverend Ignatius Persico, D.D., became the new Bishop of Georgia in 1871.49 St. Augustine’s Sisters of Mercy left to join their fellow Sisters in Columbus under the authority of Bishop Persico. They gave St. Mary’s Academy over to the Sisters of St. Joseph, who renamed the school St. Joseph’s Academy. At the request of Bishop Verot, the two lay Sisters of Mercy, Sisters Monica and Mary Ann, remained in St. Augustine and became Sisters of St. Joseph. The Sisters of Mercy remained in Columbus until that entire religious community relocated to Macon, Georgia, in 1876.50

Over the next several years, the French Sisters of St. Joseph established other schools for freedmen in St. Augustine and nearby communities. The second foundation was in Savannah, established in 1867. In 1870, with the creation of the Diocese of St. Augustine separate from the Diocese of Savannah, the work of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Georgia was no longer under the Bishop Verot. The Sisters of St. Joseph in Savannah then came under the authority of Bishop Persico. Although they maintained their relationships with their former mother houses in Le Puy and St. Augustine, their story at this point diverges from that of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Florida, and is, therefore, not addressed in this study. The major foundations in Florida during the early years were Mandarin, Jacksonville, and Fernandina.

In 1867, Verot and the Sisters considered establishing a new foundation in Jacksonville, a place where there was little Catholic presence. Mother Sidonie looked forward to the new colony for she felt it would be a base of operations for the Sisters in Savannah and St. Augustine.

49 “Sisters of Mercy in Macon,” The Bulletin of the Catholic Laymen’s Association of Georgia, December 12, 1925, p. 5.

50 Sister M. Aquin McEervey, History of the “Macon” Novitiate, Mount De Sales Academy. Copy 301.2, pasted in back of Record Book. ASSJSA.
As a small but growing commercial town, there would be more opportunities for the Sisters to support themselves as they taught free classes for blacks. Writing to the Rev. Mother in Le Puy on September 1, 1867, she told how she persuaded Verot that it would be important for them also to teach whites, saying they would be “little esteemed [in Jacksonville] if we had no white classes.”

Before the Jacksonville foundation was established, however, Bishop Verot desired the Sisters’ work to begin in Mandarin, a small community of the east side of the St. Johns River, southeast of Jacksonville (now a part of Jacksonville). On February 3, 1868, Sister Julie Roussel and Sister Mary Bernard, who was still a novice, went to Mandarin to open schools for white and black children. On February 10th, classes began; forty white students were taught in the main part of the church and twenty-seven black children were taught in the sacristy, a 12 x 16 foot room with one window. The Sisters stayed at the home of a Mrs. Hartley nearly a mile away. The Sisters walked this distance four times a day. This exertion coupled with a poor diet of hominy, sweet potatoes, molasses, cabbage, and occasional salt pork, soon left Sister Julie in extremely poor health. The mission in Mandarin was, therefore, abandoned until 1873. Sister Julie Roussel, along with another Sister and a lay teacher returned at that time and lived in their own house, greatly assisted by Father Langlade who provided priestly services and remodeled the house for them to be able to accommodate boarders. Sister Julie reported that there were then four public schools, two for whites and two for blacks. The Sisters had twenty-one students who met from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm. At first, the Sisters had girl boarders, but beginning in 1881, only boys were taken as boarders, while the girls continued as day students. A new convent was constructed in 1884.

Shortly after the first mission to Mandarin was initiated, Mother Sidonie’s desire to establish a new foundation in Jacksonville was achieved. She had drawn up plans for a convent and school and work on their construction began in 1868. They were completed in time for

51 Mother Sidonie Rascle, St. Augustine, to Rev. Mother, Le Puy, September 1, 1867. ASSJSA.
52 Letter #39, Sister Marie Julie Roussel, Mandarin, to Le Puy, March 12, 1873, ASSJSA.
53 [Mickler], Sheaves, 42-45.
Mother Sidonie’s November 15, 1869 arrival to be the Superior in Jacksonville. She was accompanied by Sister Célenie Joubert, who had come with her from France in 1866; Sister Mary Ann Hoare, the lay Sister of Mercy who at Bishop Verot’s request had joined the Sisters of St. Joseph when the other Sisters of Mercy left St. Augustine; Sister Clavéry Chambouvet; and an unnamed novice. The five Sisters who made up the entire community were very pleased with the new convent Mother Sidonie had designed, and soon began teaching. Sister Clavéry reported that a number of their students were Protestants who had “a thousand questions about our religion.”

The work in Jacksonville was quite difficult. Mother Sidonie reported:

we can do nothing with the blacks; all belong to different religions. The population of negroes is composed of 5,000 souls, of which only 30 are Catholic. They have eight different churches of their own. Their ministers preach constantly. They have their Bishops also. From time to time there are missions, of their fashion, . . . they have extraordinary times of prayer. Thus they pass almost the entire Sunday at church; they sing there; one preaches; this lasts until midnight. The devil does his work well there! Truly, without the aid of satan the poor people would not be able to resist fatigue; on certain occasions they resemble fanatics; they make a hellish noise. We have no hope.

With such despair of ever reaching African Americans in any great numbers, the Sisters turned toward the whites. Jacksonville had a population of about five or six thousand, five hundred of whom were counted as Catholics. Of those, only thirty regularly attended church. Mother Sidonie reported “The best don’t have religious instruction; they have false principles, little faith; the love of pleasure and money dominates.” Their strongest hopes lay in reaching the young people. By 1874, the Sisters had made some progress; the city then hosted twelve Protestant churches and two Catholic churches. The many

54 [Mickler], Sheaves, 33; Letter #31, Sr. Clavéry Chambouvet, Jacksonville, to Mother Agathe Deshayeux, Le Puy, December 23, 1869, ASSJSA.

55 Letter #31, Tome II, Mtr. Sidonie, Jacksonville, to Msgr. Le Superieur, Le Puy, December 18, 1872, ASSJSA.
schools already existing in Jacksonville, however, hampered their educational work there.⁵⁶

In 1871, the Sisters of Jacksonville fulfilled the wish of the pastor of the Catholic Church in Fernandina to have two Sisters assist in preparing children for the First Communion. Sister Célenie and a Sister Hélène left for Fernandina on May 12. There, they lived in the church and taught the children. The children’s parents took turns providing meals for the Sisters. Mother Sidonie expressed her excitement about the new foundation and described the mission for the Sisters in France:

I am happy to have . . . some good news to tell you. It is about a fifth foundation, a new field where your daughters will be able to work in the vineyard of the Lord. On the 12th of this month, May, my very good and dear Sister Célenie and Sister Hélène, novice, left for their mission, Fernandina.

Fernandina is a pretty little town between Savannah and Jacksonville. It has a port on the Atlantic; the largest ships may land there. The place is charming; it has always smiled at me. Surrounded like Jacksonville with great evergreen trees, it has a delightful aspect. Father John Batazzi is pastor there; he is especially fond of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

For the moment, our Sisters have only a single room for the two of them and two others for their classes; that is all they possess. In order to attract children, the classes will be free until the opening of school in September. Seven families have undertaken to provide for the needs of the Sisters; each family has a day assigned for sending the Sisters their three meals, which they take in their little bedchamber. . . .

She also noted the competition they would have with the Episcopalians:

Fernandina is the Episcopal city of the bishop of the Episcopalians; he has a pretty temple [church] and a magnificent home, but what is most distressing is that he has a boarding school or seminary for young girls; he has distinguished teachers, English and French, and excellent musicians. It will be necessary for our poor Sisters to compete with Bishop Young. . . .⁵⁷

Mother Sidonie was referring to St. Mary’s Priory, a boarding school for white young ladies established by Bishop John Freeman Young. It was started with a personal loan from the

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⁵⁶ Letter #5, Mrt. Marie Sidonie, Jacksonville, to Our Rev. Mother, [Le Puy], May 17, 1871, ASSISA.

⁵⁷ Letter #5, Tome II, Mrt. Marie Sidonie, Jacksonville, to Our Rev. Mother, [Le Puy], May 17, 1871, ASSISA.
Bishop himself, and also received support from other parishes in the Episcopal Diocese of Florida. It was the Episcopal Church’s first such school in Florida. As revealed by the September 15, 1866, St. Augustine Examiner, St. Mary’s Priory was established explicitly as a countermeasure to the Sisters of Mercy’s successful St. Mary’s Academy in St. Augustine: “one of the aims of the new priory at Fernandina was to draw the Protestant students in St. Augustine to it and to the Episcopal Church.” According to Joseph Cushman, historian of the Episcopal Church in Florida, “The two schools vied with each other during most of the Reconstruction period. The Episcopal priory, however, was at a distinct disadvantage. It did not have an order of teaching nuns, and as a result the tuition rates were much higher, so that a number of Episcopalians continued to attend the Roman school in St. Augustine.” 58 Bishop Young’s dream of staffing the priory with an Episcopal teaching order was never realized.

In 1870, through generous donations, St. Mary’s Priory was able to purchase ten acres for an improved facility; it began to increase in stature and enrollment. By 1873, the Priory had sixty girls enrolled and a staff of six. It was during this time of the school’s prosperity that Mother Sidonie bemoaned the competition the Sisters faced from the Episcopalians. In reality, they had nothing to fear. Although the Episcopal Church supported several schools, the nationwide financial panic in 1873 and mismanagement kept the schools quite small. The Episcopal Church in Florida was never able to successfully compete with the combined forces of the Roman Catholic academies and the schools of the emerging public school system. 59

By May of 1871, Sister Célenie’s health was so impaired from a lack of proper diet that the Sisters temporarily left Fernandina. Célenie returned with additional Sisters in October, however, to remain permanently and they settled into a rented cottage. Among the newcomers under Mother Célenie were Sisters Marie de Sales, Marie Louise, and Xavier. 60 Despite the Episcopalians, by the end of the decade the Sisters had established two free schools for blacks


59 Ibid., 90-93.

60 [Mickler], Sheaves, 50.
and whites in 1872, St. Peter Claver School for blacks in 1874, and a St. Joseph’s Academy for whites in 1879. The Sisters of St. Joseph continued to establish new foundations for the next several decades, expanding to nine throughout the state by the first decade of the twentieth century: First, St. Augustine in 1866; Second, in Savannah, Georgia, in 1867; Third, Mandarin in 1874; Fourth, Jacksonville in 1869; Fifth, Fernandina in 1872; Sixth, Palatka in 1876; Seventh, Elkton in 1882; Eighth, Orlando in 1889; Ninth, Ybor City in 1891; and Tenth, Miami in 1905.

By 1920, the Sisters of St. Joseph had opened: day schools in Palatka (1876); St. Ambrose School in Elkton, southwest of St. Augustine (1882); St. Agnes School, North City, a suburb of St. Augustine (1889), St. Joseph Academies in Orlando (1891) and in Ybor City (now part of Tampa) (1892), and St. Cecelia’s School, a school for blacks, in St. Augustine (1898).

The Ybor City foundation was on the west coast of Florida, over two hundred miles away from St. Augustine, but its difference from the other missions went beyond geography, and a fuller discussion of the Sisters’ work there is warranted. Unlike the earlier missions, which established schools for whites and blacks, the work in Ybor City focused on the community’s large number of cigar factory workers, most of whom were Spanish, Cuban, Sicilian, or Italian and brought up in the Catholic Church. The large influx of these ethnic groups came to the Tampa area in 1885, when Vicente Martinez Ybor, a Spaniard by birth, moved his cigar making enterprises from Key West to establish factories and a company town two miles northeast of downtown Tampa. Other cigar manufacturers also relocated to Tampa after two major fires in Key West. By 1900, the number of factories and workers surpassed the numbers in Key West. Of the immigrants, Cubans made up the largest group.

A concerted Catholic effort to work with the people of Tampa began as result of yellow fever epidemics in 1887 and 1888. Jesuit priests were sent to Tampa and were so successful that

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62 Our first one hundred years, unpaged. See Appendix A for list of schools.

Bishop John Moore asked them to stay. The first Catholic Church in Ybor City was Our Lady of Mercy, built in 1890, five years after the founding of Ybor’s company town, with the expectation of meeting the spiritual needs of the 2500 Cubans, plus the Italian and Spanish Catholics.\footnote{Mormino and Pozzetta, \textit{Immigrant World}, 210.}

In response to a request from the Jesuit priests, Bishop Moore asked that some Sisters of St. Joseph be sent to minister to the Cubans in Ybor City. In September 1891, Mother Lazarus L’hostal, the Provincial Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Florida, accompanied three Sisters to open a house in Ybor City. They were: French Sister Onésime Vedrine, age 37, who came from the academy in Jacksonville, as the Superior; Mary Catherine Byrne, age 32, from the Orlando house, where she had been the Superior; and Theophelia Sullivan, a novice in her 20s, from Massachusetts.

A different group of Catholic Sisters, Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, had established Academy of the Holy Names in Tampa in 1881, and were quite successful with their white, English-speaking students. Those Sisters also ran a school for black children, St. Peter Claver Catholic School.\footnote{Jane Quinn, “Nuns in Ybor City: The Sisters of St. Joseph and the Immigrant Community,” \textit{Tampa Bay History} (Vol. 5, No. 1, Spring/Summer 1983), 26.} The Sisters of St. Joseph’s mission to the immigrants of Ybor City was quite different from the one in Tampa. Living in a tiny, three-room cottage next to the church, they managed to begin classes a week after their arrival, using various areas in the church building as their classrooms, where they taught the usual curriculum of academic and religious subjects. As with the first Sisters who came to Florida in 1866, language was a barrier; none of the Sisters spoke Spanish or Italian. Even so, Vicente Ybor, the great cigar manufacturer, and many factory employees sent their children to the Sisters’ school.

The Sisters found the children to be “intelligent but utterly ignorant of their religious duties,” practicing various forms of popular religious piety, but with little understanding of standard, Church-sanctioned religious practices. Few ever attended Mass, and those who did
were usually women and children. Concerning masculine participation, the Sisters observed, “The men, with very few exceptions, have no faith.” Discipline was also a problem: “Teaching . . . was difficult. The children were bright but not accustomed to restraint. They would speak aloud in school, leave their places without permission and, as it was necessary to have someone interpret all that was said by teachers or pupils, there was unending confusion.” The teaching environment was so difficult that two novices quit, abandoning their aspirations to become Sisters.66

In 1892, with money borrowed or raised through fairs, the Sisters built a small frame building to serve as St. Joseph’s Academy. It was completed in October 1892, and the following spring there were 176 students. The academy offered the same classes as were provided in the initial classes, but now the Sisters also offered instruction in music, drawing, calligraphy, phonography, typewriting, sewing, and embroidery. The lack of money, however, was always a problem, and it was not until 1895 that a real convent was built for the Sisters.67

By 1895-1896, the Sisters began teaching English to Italian immigrants, but at the same time the war between Spain and its Cuban colony impacted the Sisters’ work. Many of their Cuban students stopped paying their tuition or stopped attending altogether because their families were sending funds to support the Cuban revolution. When the United States entered the conflict in 1898, many American troops were stationed in Tampa and Fernandina. The Sisters of St. Joseph were among those who helped to tend to the soldiers’ medical needs. At the convent, Mother Onésime left to become the Superior at the Orlando house; she was replaced by Mother Marie Louise Hughes.68

The chronicles recorded by the Sisters in Ybor City mention the difficulties they encountered, but give no hint of the deep-seated hatred with which they were viewed by the radicals in the community. In their book, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their*

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Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985, Gary Mormino and George Pozzetta provide a grimmer description of the Sisters’ experiences in Ybor City. The difficulties extended beyond the challenge of teaching unruly children who did not speak the Sisters’ language.

The late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries were a time of challenges to the old order with such radical ideas as anarchism, socialism, and communism coming out of Southern Europe. Part of the old order that was rejected was formal religion, especially that espoused by the Roman Catholic Church. This antipathy grew out of many immigrants’ experiences with a corrupt church in Europe, whose priests and bishops, they said, had built temporal empires at the expense of the poor.69

The Cuban, Sicilian, and Italian workers in Ybor City were particularly hostile toward the local Roman Catholic priests because they had accepted donations from the Spanish factory owners who dominated the church. Their privileged place of power was particularly odious to the Cubans who supported the Cuban rebellion against Spain. They “viewed the Catholic church and the colonial Spanish government as twin oppressors of their homeland. In addition to the class struggles, adherents of the prevailing radical ideologies fomented hatred of the Catholic Church, seeing it as “an even greater foe than capitalism.”70 According to Mormino and Pozzetta, “Parish priests, missionaries and the Sisters of St. Joseph . . . battled a stream of anticlerical invective which filled the pages of leftist newspapers and frequently spilled over into street-corner rhetoric.”71 The authors assert that although churches and schools were built, the Catholics actually realized little success in their efforts to overcome apathy or outright hostility until later in the twentieth century. This evaluation seems to be supported by Bishop Patrick Barry, the prelate over the Diocese of St. Augustine, who wrote in 1935: “For fifty years and more, zealous, unselfish priests and Sisters here exhausted themselves in trying to save these

69 Mormino and Pozzetta, Immigrant World, 23.
70 Ibid., 212.
71 Ibid.
people [of Ybor City], and their reward must be sought in heaven for they receive no earthly one.”

Protestant missionaries also sought to reach the souls of the Ybor City immigrants. Seeing the difficulties encountered by the Catholic Church, various Protestant denominations tried to break through the antagonism toward organized religion: Congregationalists from 1893 to 1904, Episcopalians from 1894-ca. 1897, Baptists, 1902 to the 1930s, Presbyterians from 1908-ca. 1910, and Methodists (Methodist Episcopal Church, South) from 1886-1939. They tried to minister to the Cubans, Sicilians, and Italians with varying degrees of success until about 1940. With such hostility toward formal religion, the successes they achieved came through the schools, including nursery schools and kindergartens which assisted the working mothers, rather than churches.

In many respects, the missionary efforts in Ybor City repeated the experiences of the Sisters of St. Joseph and the missionaries of the American Missionary Association who competed with each other to reach the freedmen after the Civil War. In Ybor City, however, the cultural differences exceeded the language barriers for the Sisters. Both the Sisters and their rivals, the Protestant missionaries, faced adherents of radical ideologies that included a virulent anticlericalism based on Old World experiences with the Catholic Church. The ideologies created a hatred for formal religion that the even the Sisters’ rivals could not overcome, as evidenced by their relatively short-lived efforts. The Catholic Church, however, persevered. The Sisters of St. Joseph left Ybor City in 1944, and turned their work at St. Joseph’s Academy over to the Sisters of Notre Dame, and their work at St. Benedict the Moor School, a school for African Americans they had opened in February 1903, over to the Sisters of St. Francis.

Because of the tensions associated with the cultural and political climate of Tampa, the school in Tampa presented the Sisters of St. Joseph with challenges unlike those experienced at


73 Mormino and Pozzetta, Immigrant World, 225-227.

74 McGoldrick, Beyond the Call, 301.
the other schools the Sisters of St. Joseph had established in Florida. The establishment of St. Cecelia’s School for black children in St. Augustine, however, was the crowning achievement of the Sisters’ work to educate African-American children in Florida.

From the very beginning of the Sisters of St. Joseph’s ministry to the people of St. Augustine, the spiritual and secular education of the newly freed slaves was their primary objective. Over the years until 1898, the Sisters taught in a variety of locations. Their first school, one for black boys, opened in November 1866 in a small coquina and tabby building located just south of the southeast corner of Cadiz (formerly known as Green) Street and St. George Street. The Sisters began with twenty students, but by February 1867, there were sixty boys enrolled. They also taught girls in a separate class. Black adults met for class at night on the first floor of the convent, the O’Reilly House. In September 1883, the Sisters opened a school for black children on the third floor of the old convent that had been used by the Sisters of Mercy. In 1869, after the Sisters of Mercy left, the Sisters of St. Joseph purchased the convent and its furnishings and opened a free school for white girls there. This school was the best facility the Sisters had ever had for their black students, and for the first time one that was worthy of a name, St. Cecilia’s School. In 1895, the old St. Mary’s Convent became a cigar factory, and St. Cecilia’s moved into the former public school for blacks.

Although the Sisters at first were greatly hampered by their inability to speak English, within a year or so, they had gained enough proficiency to provide a basic secular curriculum in addition to religious instruction. Black students received the same instruction as the students in the Sisters’ free white schools: reading, writing, arithmetic, social studies, and catechism.

In 1890, a Mlle. Dumas deeded the “Dumas Block” to the Diocese of St. Augustine. It was bounded by Central Avenue on the east, Sanford Street on the west, St. Francis Street on the

75 Ibid., 130-131. The little house where the boys were taught was torn down in 1908.
76 Ibid., 272.
77 Ibid., 305.
78 Personal communication, Sister Thomas Joseph McGoldrick, St. Augustine to Barbara Mattick, September 26, 2007.
north, and DeHaven Street on the south, in the middle of Lincolnville, the historic black section of St. Augustine. Bishop John Moore saw this donation as an opportunity to build a school and eventually a church there, as well as houses that could provide rental income to pay a resident priest. Mlle. Dumas died in 1896.

In 1898, the Bishop took steps to provide a better facility for the Sisters’ African-American students and proposed the construction of a new school in an unidentified report:

There is the greatest need of a school in St. Augustine, as the present one is an old building loaned to us by Mr. H.M. Flagler. We own a whole block in a part of the city called Lincolnville, which is the center of the colored population. The property measures 310 x 253 and I could erect on it at a cost of about $8,000 a two story building, with classrooms on the first floor, and a hall on the second floor, which would be used for meetings . . .

In 1895, Bishop Moore had successfully appealed to Sister Katharine Drexel for funds to complete a school for African Americans in Tampa. Katharine Drexel was the founder of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, a Catholic order whose specific mission was to serve Native Americans and African Americans. Such efforts were funded by the huge inheritance she received after the death of her father, Philadelphia banker Francis Drexel, who died in 1885.

Bishop Moore returned to the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament well in 1898, this time on behalf of St. Cecilia’s School in St. Augustine, and was again successful. Writing to Mother Katharine on March 9, 1898, to thank her for the five thousand dollar check he had just received from her, he reported on the status of the project: “Within two weeks it will be completed, and dry enough to transfer the children to it. As soon as the work is finished the St. Cecilia Society

79 “St. Benedict the Moor,” in Brief History of the Churches of the Diocese of St. Augustine, Florida, Part Two (St. Leo, Florida: Abby Press, 1923), 26, Hereafter cited as “St. Benedict the Moor,” Brief History;

80 McGoldrick, Beyond the Call, 309.

81 John Moore, D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of St. Augustine, St. Augustine, to Mother Katharine Drexel, January 6, 1894; March 13, 1894; April 19, 1894; May 14, 1895; and Bishop John Moore, D.D. to Mother M. Magdalen, June 9, 1895. Photocopies provided by Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Bensalem, Pennsylvania.


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composed of young colored girls, proposes to give a few entertainments in it. We will then have
an opportunity to see how proud our Colored Catholics are of their ‘House of Refuge.’”

The Sisters considered St. Cecilia’s School a great triumph. The school’s records show
that, from 1895 to 1899, one hundred seventeen students, representing sixty families, were
enrolled. The Diocese of St. Augustine continued in Sister Katharine Drexel’s good graces for
years. In 1903, Bishop Kenny successfully appealed for funds for a black school in Jacksonville,
and received twelve hundred dollars from the benefactress. Katharine Drexel’s passion for the
Catholic evangelization of African Americans was well represented in the Diocese of St.
Augustine and provided excellent facilities for the work of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

St. Cecilia’s was fully completed in April 1898, and the closing exercises were held in
the hall on the second floor. If a program from the closing exercises held in 1910 is any
indication, the 1898 festivities were similar to those held for all of the Sisters’ schools, with
students’ singing, recitations, and piano solos. The Sisters of St. Joseph taught many
generations of St. Augustine’s blacks, many of whom were not Catholic, in this building until
1964, when the institution for students in kindergarten through the eighth grade then known as
St. Benedict the Moor School, was closed after the advent of integration during the Civil Rights
era.

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83 John Moore, D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of St. Augustine, St. Augustine, to Sister Katharine, March 9, 1898. In
the same letter, Moore told her how pleased blacks in Mandarin were with a new schoolhouse, apparently not
funded by Mother Katharine. Moore said the white children at the local public school were jealous that the “colored
children’s” schoolhouse was better than theirs, and added, “The colored people are flattered and encouraged when
they see such attention paid to their wants.” Photocopy provided by Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed

84 McGoldrick, Beyond the Call, 306.

85 M.M. Katharine Drexel, Convent of the Blessed Sacrament, St. Elizabeth’s, Mand, P.O. Pennsylvania, to Bishop
Wm. J. Kenny, [St Augustine], [1903]. Records of the Diocese of St. Augustine. Microfilm, Reel 3, (2Ci), P.K.
Yonge Library, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

86 Program from Closing Exercises, St. Cecilia’s School, St. Augustine, Fla., Monday, May 23rd, 1910. In
McGoldrick, Beyond the Call, 307.


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By 1872, it was clear that the Sisters of St. Joseph’s greatest victories with the freedmen would be in St. Augustine, where many of the blacks were already Catholic. The mission in Jacksonville, where there were few black Catholics, therefore, was primarily to the white population, and that, too, was a challenge.\textsuperscript{88} The Sisters’ successes throughout the state were many and varied, but lay primarily in the establishment of schools which became the seeds of a statewide parochial school system.

\textsuperscript{88} Letter #31, Tome II. Mr. Sidonie Rascle, Jacksonville to Msgr. Le Superieur, Le Puy, December 18, 1872, ASSJSA.
Figure 3. Map of France, showing Le Puy-en-Velay (Le Puy).
From McGoldrick, Beyond the Call. Used with permission.
Figure 4. Le Puy, France. From McGoldrick, *Beyond the Call*. Used with permission.
Figure 5. First Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine from France. From McGoldrick, *Beyond the Call*. Used by permission.
Figure 6. Aviles Street behind the Sisters of St. Joseph’s Convent, 1870s. From McGoldrick, *Beyond the Call*. Used with permission.
Figure 7. Sisters of St. Joseph’s first class, 1867. From McGoldrick, *Beyond the Call*. Used with permission.
Figure 8. Nineteenth-century foundations of the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine
CHAPTER THREE
THE COMPETITION FOR BLACK SOULS AND MINDS:
THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH VERSUS THE AMERICAN MISSIONARY
ASSOCIATION AND OTHER PROTESTANTS

Many of the freed slaves in St. Augustine were practicing Catholics, having followed the religion of their former owners. Some were descendants of runaway slaves who had found refuge among the Spanish at Fort Mose during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. When Bishop Verot went to France to recruit Roman Catholic Sisters to work among the freedmen in Florida and Georgia, he was ready to pitch battle with the Northern Protestant missionaries who had already established a strong foothold among the freedmen in Florida. He was confident that Catholic blacks would remain faithful to the Church and the others would be drawn to the Catholic Church’s liturgy and pomp. Protestants also recognized the potential power of the elaborate Catholic liturgy. What neither Verot nor his Protestant competitors anticipated was the overwhelming victory that new African-American denominations would achieve over both of them in the quest for black souls.

Bishop Verot wrote to fellow bishop Patrick Lynch in 1865, “The Catholic religion is eminently favorable for attracting and winning the admiration of the Negroes because of the pomp, variety, and symbolism of its ceremonial ritual.” Lynch agreed, as did most Southern bishops, concerning the freedmen, “The ceremonies of the Church, the Processions, Novenas, etc. would satisfy the cravings of their still tropical nature for pomp and ceremony in a way that would draw many of them from the cold services of Protestant worship.” The strongly evangelical American Missionary Association also recognized the potential power of the

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1 The Spanish had promised freedom to fugitive slaves in Florida if they converted to Catholicism. Between 1687 and 1738, about one hundred slaves from South Carolina fled to the Spanish colony. The government established a fort and town, Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose (Fort Mose), just north of St. Augustine. Black militiamen manned the fort, providing the first line of defense for St. Augustine. Fort Mose was the “first legally sanctioned free black town in what is now the United States.” Fort Mose was abandoned when the British took control of Florida in 1763. Kathleen Deagan and Darcie MacMahon, Fort Mose: Colonial America’s Black Fortress of Freedom (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995), vii, 19, 37.

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Catholic liturgy and “expressed the fear that the ‘splendors’ of the Catholic Church would appeal to the Negro’s ‘love of display.’”2 Their assertions were true for at least one young black woman. The Sisters of St. Joseph wrote of a 15-year old girl in Savannah who faithfully came to the convent each morning and evening for about twelve days. They diligently worked with her as she struggled to learn prayers such as the Lord’s Prayer and Hail Mary. Sister Julie Roussel wrote:

to encourage her we praised her a little, and... as I told her she would soon know the Credo and Confiteor, she made an exclamation of joy and said: “Oh Sister, if I knew all my prayers tomorrow I would be baptized! How happy I would be. Oh God, I am not able to wait for Christmas, it is too long and I long too much to be a Catholic! How ‘proud’ I will be when I am one. I love to go into your church and see your little children dressed in white who go and return, and you before the priest, greeting him... and also the priest with his beautiful clothes, greeting and genuflecting; then he turns and prays, “Oh, my Jesus!...” That poor woman in pronouncing these last words let fall big tears and taking her apron off to wipe them, she added: “Sister, by only thinking of it I feel in my heart something I cannot explain... we do not feel that in the Protestant churches.”3

One of Verot’s most compelling reasons given in his appeals for support from Roman Catholic Sisters, however, was the need to counter the inroads already made among blacks by Protestants, despite their “cold services.” As stated before, Verot proclaimed, “[W]e must make a beginning by establishing schools – a necessity. The [northern] Protestants have anticipated us here: they have opened free schools which the Negroes attend in great numbers. ... We must, therefore, prepare for the contest... in procuring religious instruction for this simple and docile race.”4 He was correct in his assessment of the situation. There were, indeed, numerous groups


3 Letter #3, Sister M. Julia Roussel, St. Augustine, to Mother Agatha, Le Puy, after Sr. Julie’s return from Savannah to St. Augustine, St. Augustine, letter commenced 29 December 1867 and completed 14 January 1868, ASSJSA. Sister Julie may have provided the religious terminology in relating the incident.

4 Gannon, Rebel Bishop, 117.
of Protestants at work among the freedmen in Florida. The American Missionary Association was probably the most important of them.

Teachers and ministers from the American Missionary Association (AMA), headquartered in New York City, had begun their work in Florida and Georgia even as the Civil War was still raging.⁵ The AMA was created in 1846 by the merging of the Union Missionary Society, the Committee for West Indian Missions, and the Western Evangelical Missionary Society. Its founders were evangelical abolitionists and included George Whipple and Simeon S. Jocelyn. At first the AMA was an interdenominational organization, but after 1865 it became closely tied to the Congregational Church.

The AMA’s work in the South to provide relief and education for slaves began when its agents went to Fortress Monroe, Virginia, in September 1861, five years before the Sisters of St. Joseph arrived in St. Augustine. The numbers of AMA missionaries increased steadily until, by 1868, there were 532 in the South. Their official goal was to enable blacks to fend for themselves politically and socially, and to run their own schools. The AMA’s officers also were motivated by religion and patriotism. “Equality before the law was the ‘gospel rule,’ the AMA concluded, and the country’s ‘political salvation’ depended upon its implementation.”⁶

As Bishop Verot had noted in his appeal for French support, the Protestant AMA had sent both men and women to the South to teach the freedmen. Among the first AMA missionaries to work in Florida were Gorham and Harriet Greely, who worked for the AMA in St. Augustine from 1864 to the beginning of 1866. Gorham, born in Maine ca. 1801, was recorded in the 1850 census as a Methodist minister serving in Boston, Massachusetts. Listed with him were his wife Harriet B., age 45; and two daughters, Harriet E., age 20; and Caroline G., age 15. The Greelys may have run a boarding house, for the household also included nine other adults and one child. Among them were a physician and another Methodist clergyman. The 1859 New York State

⁵ Based on Freedmen’s Journal at the Boston Public Library, at least seven teachers from other organizations are known to have taught in St. Augustine in 1863. “Letters from St. Augustine,” The Ancient City Genealogist, St. Augustine Genealogical Society, St. Johns County, Florida. Volume 4, Issue 1 (April 1993), p. 11.

Business Directory listed Gorham A. Greeley as a Methodist Episcopal clergyman in Saratoga Springs, but by the next year, the 1860 census gave his occupation as real estate broker. Apparently the real estate profession afforded a comfortable living at this time, for he lived only with his wife Harriet and two daughters and employed a live-in servant.\(^7\)

Harriet Greely’s letters to George Whipple, the Corresponding Secretary of the AMA in New York, provide insight into the interpersonal relationships that existed between the missionaries and their African-American students. It was she who taught in the regular school and made home visits, while Gorham took care of official business with the AMA, and preached and taught Sabbath School. This was the typical division of labor between the men and women missionaries.\(^8\) One letter particularly expresses the nature of their work and Harriet’s devotion to her efforts among the freedmen:

> It has . . . seemed to be my duty to diffuse my [evangelical] influence more generally among the people [only about one quarter of the Freedman teachers were evangelical] by visiting more among the people from house to house especially the sick, reading the scriptures &c. &c. Still helping forward these elderly persons who have begun to read the scriptures, and looking particularly after the poor – for we have had not a few of the very poor . . . our house is the resort for help, advice, assistance in their business matters such as making out their bills – contracts, writing letters and teaching a few. . . . I not only feel my heart as much devoted to the cause now as when I first entered into it, but much more so. I better understand the people and their wants, and can better adapt myself to gain their interests and affections.\(^9\)

Occasionally Harriet made references to the Catholics in St. Augustine. In January 1865, she wrote Brother Whipple, “We have about a dozen Catholics in our school; two of them young men, have lately ventured to our church and Sab[bath]School. There are many Catholics here, some descendants of the Spanish who first settled here, and many curious old relics [sic] of

\(^7\) U.S.Census, Population Schedules, 1850 and 1860. Gorham and Harriet’s last name appears as Greeley in censuses, but Greely in their letters.

\(^8\) Richardson, Christian Reconstruction, 145.

\(^9\) H.B. Greely, St. Augustine, to George Whipple, New York, December 9, 1865. Photocopy from the American Missionary Association Collection at Fisk University. The originals are now held at the Amistad Research Center (ARC), Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.
those times”10 About nine months later, Gorham wrote Whipple, “... I am informed that the Catholicks [sic] are about to open a School for Colored children.” Acknowledging the strength of the Catholic influence in the Ancient City, Gorham suggested that rather than struggling against their influences, the AMA would be wiser to focus their efforts on Jacksonville, where the Catholic Church had little presence. 11 This was a full year before the Sisters of St. Joseph arrived in the city.

In early 1866, the Freedman’s Bureau bought 8,000 acres on the right bank of the St. Johns River to sell to freedmen at $3.00 an acre. The project developed into the Sammis Plantation Colony, later called the Strawberry Mills Mission. Gorham reported, “About one half of the protestant colored people of this place have engaged lots of land, and are making haste to move... Probably very few, except the Catholics and the soldiers will remain [in St. Augustine] by the last of this month.”12 The Greelys left St. Augustine and went to the Sammis Plantation Colony, near Jacksonville. Harriet took over the school there in March. It had been under the care of Carrie E. Jocelyn, daughter of AMA official Simeon S. Jocelyn, until health concerns caused her to leave.13 By June 1866, Harriet was teaching at a school in Jacksonville, while Gorham remained at Sammis Plantation. Although many AMA missionaries returned to the North over the hot summers, Gorham wrote in July 1866 that he and Harriet intended to remain through the summer, partly because of cholera outbreaks in the North, and partly to ensure that they would not lose any of the religious gains they had made among the freedmen in the previous months.14 Gorham’s next monthly report for July indicated that the name of the colony was changed to Strawberry Mills. Other correspondence indicates he stayed at Strawberry Mills until at least June 1867. The last letter from Gorham, according to the AMA Correspondence Index at

10 Harriet B. Greely, St. Augustine, to George Whipple, New York, January 23, 1865, ARC.


12 G. Greely, St. Augustine, to George Whipple, New York, January 4, 1866, ARC.

13 Mrs. H.B. Greely, Sammis Plantation Colony, near Jacksonville, to Mr. S[amuel]. Hunt, April 1, 1866, ARC.

the Amistad Research Center, was dated October 1867. The index shows that letters from Harriet continue until December 16, 1867, and came from Belgrade, Maine, indicating they had returned to the state of Gorham’s birth. After that, all trace of the Greelys vanished from the AMA letters and census records.15

The husband- and-wife team of Gorham and Harriet Greeley was unusual; most of the teachers were single, white women in their 20s, who were well educated, graduates of normal schools, female academies or colleges, and hailed from the North.16 The correspondence of some of the AMA teachers reveals that this description, for the most part, held true in Florida. Besides the Greelys and Carrie Jocelyn, the AMA missionaries who served in Florida in direct competition with the Sisters of St. Joseph were: Miss Lydia P. Auld from East Boston, Massachusetts, who served in St. Augustine from 1868 to 1870; Mrs. Minnie Owen Beale, probably from New York, who taught in the Ancient City from 1872 to 1875; Miss Emma B. Eveleth, possibly from New York, who taught in Jacksonville from 1865 to 1867, and in Gainesville from 1868 to 1873; and Miss Celia E. Williams, from Deerfield, Massachusetts, who served in Jacksonville from 1869 to 1876.17

There is little available personal information about most of the AMA missionaries who came to Florida. Celia Williams, whose full name was Lucretia Electa Williams, however, is widely recognized for her work in secondary schools for the freedmen. Born in Deerfield, Massachusetts, in 1824, at the age of 40 she began her work among blacks in the South. She taught in South Carolina, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. In 1867, Williams began teaching at the Hampton Normal & Industrial Institute in Virginia, where its founder, Samuel Chapman Armstrong, asked her to organize the Normal School department. She organized it, and then

15 G. Greely, Strawberry Mills Mission, Jacksonville, to Rev. Edwd. P. Smith, Genl Field Agent, AMA, June 10, 1867, ARC; AMA Correspondence Index, online at: http://www.tulane.edu/~amistad/research.htm. The family does not appear in the 1870 census. Gorham, who would have been nearly 70 years old, and Harriet, about 65 by that time, may have died. Their daughters may have married and, therefore, no longer appear in the census under the family name.


17 AMA Correspondence Index, online at: http://www.tulane.edu/~amistad/research.htm.
went on to develop the physical facilities and curriculum. The Normal School opened in April 1868. In the fall of 1869, the AMA sent her to Jacksonville, Florida, to establish a similar school. The Stanton Normal School opened in November. Its seven teachers and three hundred students comprised the first secondary school for freedmen in Florida. After seven years as principal, Williams retired and returned to Deerfield, where she died in December 1895.18

In many respects the AMA missionaries were not very different from the French Sisters of St. Joseph. Both groups were genuinely concerned about the spiritual status of the freedmen, and they shared similar trials and joys in their ministries to them. There were significant differences between them, however, that made the competition between them fierce. Most of the AMA teachers were from New England; few were foreign-born. The most critical difference between them, though, was that most AMA teachers were evangelical Protestants and adamantly anti-Catholic.19 As an organization, the AMA was driven by a fear that moral society, as defined by members of the mainstream Northern middle class, was crumbling, and identified “Romanism, rum, and ignorance” as major agents of that decline. They considered Roman Catholics to be their chief rivals in seeking the souls of the freedmen.20 Indeed, Catholicism was a powerful force in St. Augustine, where in 1867, three fourths of the population was Catholic, including the majority of freedmen.21

Catholics tended to be just as strongly anti-Protestant, and the Sisters were ready to face the challenge posed by the Northern Protestants described by Bishop Verot. Added to the competition the AMA missionaries faced from Catholicism, was the hatred they encountered


19 Joe M. Richardson, “‘We are truly doing missionary work’: Letters from American Missionary Association Teachers in Florida, 1864-1874,” Florida Historical Quarterly, 54 (October 1975), 184.


from Southern whites, not so much because they had come to the South to convert heathen blacks, but because in carrying out their mission work they intended to impart to blacks their Yankee values. C.B. Wilder, an AMA missionary, described the tense post-Civil War climate in Jacksonville:

The Spirit of Slavery is the “ruling passion” still, among the Southern people, but while fear and poverty holds [sic] it in suspense the “set time” is upon us to apply healing remedies & the elevating influences of knowledge & the gospel of the Son of God – Up to within the last six months the old feeling of hatred arrogance and spite was observable often cropping out here and there, sometimes in open insults to northerners, but more generally in suspicions & insinuations, watching for what they had so long asserted, that the Yankees were course [sic], inbred & revengeful.\(^{22}\)

Although there had been some initial opposition to the work of the Sisters of St. Joseph with blacks, St. Augustine’s whites soon embraced the nuns. The Sisters’ acceptance in the Ancient City was made easier because they were everything the AMA missionaries were not: they were Catholic, not Protestant and were from France, not the North. Furthermore, they were sponsored by the beloved Bishop Verot, who had been such a champion of the Confederacy. Conditions were, however, less favorable for them in other Florida communities. In Jacksonville, for example, the Sisters of St. Joseph faced strong Protestant opposition.

The Sisters of St. Joseph also had to compete against the work of the Freedmen’s Bureau schools which enjoyed the support of the government and private organizations, such as the Peabody Foundation and the AMA. Writing from St. Augustine, Mother Sidonie lamented: “We have mostly to contend with the protestant schools, which are the only recognized by the government, and, by the same, are grandly supported and comfortable, lacking nothing they desire.”\(^{23}\)

\(^{22}\) C.B. Wilder, Jacksonville to A.M. Association, New York, January 1, 1868, ARC.

\(^{23}\) Letter from Mtr. Sidonie, St. Augustine, to the Motherhouse in Le Puy, January 29, 1869. Published in a report from Maison-Mère de la Congrégation de St-Joseph, Du Puy. On file at Archives, Sœurs de St. Joseph du Puy, France. From 1868 to 1897, George Peabody, an American philanthropist then living in England, donated $3.5 million to encourage education for all races in the South. Between 1868 and September 1897, Florida received $67,375 from the fund. J.L.M. Curry, *Brief Sketch of George Peabody, and History of The Peabody Education*
Although she had an exaggerated idea of the affluence of the freedmen’s schools, she was correct in assessing the recognition and support the AMA missionaries received. The work of the Freedmen’s Bureau in St. Johns County was a partnership between the United States government, the local school system which was supported by county taxes, and several freedmen’s aid associations, including the AMA missionaries. These organizations maintained primary schools, night schools, Sabbath Schools, industrial training schools, temperance schools, normal schools, and summer schools. Harriet Greely had earlier testified as to the well-being of these schools in St. Augustine when she wrote Secretary Whipple in January of 1865, “The Freedman’s Relief Association have four good teachers here and two schools; one primary and one advanced – two teachers at each – all ladies . . . they are kept in the Meth Col Church, one session each day. They are doing well.”

By 1872, the Sisters’ Protestant competition was even more firmly established. When O. Bronson, St. Johns County’s first superintendent of schools, submitted his report to the Florida Superintendent of Public Instruction in Tallahassee, he reported that six schools were in operation in St. Johns County, including a thriving Peabody school. He further reported, “The colored school occupies a commodious building erected by the Freedman’s Bureau, and to it is attached a convenient cottage for the teacher’s residence, owned by the American Missionary Association, in New York. This school has always maintained a high reputation. It has been a great blessing to those for whom it was established.” With so many non-Catholic forces at work, it is no wonder the Sisters of St. Joseph felt greatly disadvantaged, and often wrote of their struggle against the ever-zealous Protestants.

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25 H.B. Greely, St. Augustine, to Whipple, New York, January 23, 1865, ARC.

Mother Sidonie also lamented that the Protestants apparently paid the parents a dollar a month to send their children to the Protestant schools, and that many who went to those schools asserted that only the catechism was taught in the Catholic schools; some wanted to go to the Protestant schools so they would not have to study religion. Because most of the Sisters were still struggling to learn English in the early years of their mission to Florida, the charge that they taught only religion was essentially true. The early letters from the Sisters spoke of their attempts to teach acts of piety such as how to make the sign of the cross, or how to recite the Lord’s Prayer, Hail Mary, or the Creed, rewarding good students with medals or colorful religious cards. They made little mention of academic instruction. The AMA teachers, who had no language barrier, immediately taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and advanced subjects such as geography. In religious instruction they emphasized Bible reading, scripture memorization and recitation, and study at Sabbath Schools. The great desire among many African Americans after the Civil War was to learn to read. Some were eager to acquire the skill to be able to vote, but many were inspired by their longing to be able to read the Bible themselves. Harriet Greely enthusiastically described her class of between forty and sixty-four adult students who were studying reading, spelling and writing: “With nearly all in my school who can read, the Bible takes the precedence, and with some it is the only book.” Instead of medals and religious cards, in the AMA schools, New Testaments were a prized reward for many who did well in their studies. AMA missionary Lydia P. Auld noted, however, that the Catholics in her classes rarely owned Bibles.

As dismayed as the Sisters of St. Joseph were by the work of the Protestants, the public school officials, for their part, were equally frustrated by the strong Catholic resistance they

27 Letter #88, Mtr. Sidonie, St. Augustine, to Bishop in Le Puy, December 10, 1867, ASSJSA.
28 Harriet Greely, Sammis Plantation, Jacksonville, to R.B. Hunt, May 10, 1866, ARC.
29 H.B. Greely, St. Augustine, to Whipple, New York, August 7, 1865, ARC.
30 L.P. Auld, St. Augustine, to Rev. E.P. Smith, December 31, 1868, ARC.
experienced in St. Augustine. In 1873, George W. Atwood, the Secretary of the Board of Trustees for Public School #2, in writing to the AMA to solicit their continued support, said,

I have before informed you that our population is four fifths Roman Catholic and we consequently meet with great opposition, tho’ our schools thus far have had a much larger attendance than the RC [Roman Catholic] schools, and our pupils are far ahead of them in their progress of education tho’ every effort has been made by the RC to popularize their schools, and the Bishop, Priests and Nuns have threatened all sorts of anathema upon their people who have sent their children to our schools.\(^{31}\)

A year later he reported, “We continue to have not only vigorous but virulent opposition from our Roman Catholic neighbors, and the Bishop openly proclaims our school a pestilence in this city.”\(^{32}\)

The local newspaper endorsed the Sisters’ work, without any mention of the work of the Sisters’ Protestant counterparts. Describing a picnic held by the Sisters of St. Joseph for their Catholic Colored School students and the students’ parents in May 1874, the paper enthusiastically supported the work of the Sisters of St. Joseph among blacks. They especially lauded the Sisters’ success in instilling discipline and order not only in their students, but in the students’ parents as well:

The discipline and order, with which the whole affair was conducted, reflected credit upon those who have had the intellectual and moral training of this School. The parents of the children were in attendance, and deported themselves with such grateful deference, as is in honor due to those who have substantially, and without reward, labored for the enlightenment of the rising generations of this city, “without regard to color or previous condition.”

The Colored population of this City are largely Catholic, and ever since the war have had the benefit of liberal educational opportunity which has advanced them in a standard of Citizenship above almost any other city in the South.

\(^{31}\) Geo. W. Atwood, St. Augustine, to E.M. Cravath, New York, November 1, 1873, ARC. Statistics for the numbers of students taught by the Sisters and the AMA missionaries, gathered from letters and scattered monthly reports, support Atwood’s statement that the Sisters had fewer students. From 1865-1870, in St. Augustine Sisters of St. Joseph taught 154 black students, while AMA teachers taught 329. American Missionary Association Archives. Florida (New Orleans, LA: Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, [1972]). 2 reels, Film 3204 at Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.

\(^{32}\) Geo. W. Atwood, St. Augustine, to E.M. Cravath, New York, October 16, 1874, ARC.
In giving justice where it properly belongs we must say, that the credit for the advancement of this particular class of our community belongs to Catholic influence directed under the auspices of the Right Rev. Bishop Verot . . . 33

This evaluation clearly shows the editor’s bias toward the work of the Catholic Church and the value he placed on proper deportment among blacks, both young and old.

The men and women who came to Florida from the North as evangelical Protestant missionaries for the American Missionary Association, and the women who came as Roman Catholic Sisters of St. Joseph, in large measure to counter the AMA efforts, were from extreme ends of the religious spectrum in nineteenth century America. Even so, their purposes were actually the same: winning souls for God.

Even though their goal was the same, their motives were slightly different. To the Sisters of St. Joseph, salvation was only possible through the Roman Catholic Church; Protestants were heretics. This was consistent with nineteenth-century Catholic doctrine. The Protestant missionaries of the American Missionary Association were dedicated to bringing the former slaves into the Protestant fold, for they, just as adamantly, considered Roman Catholics to be lost souls. Furthermore, as Americans, the AMA missionaries also had a vested interest in teaching African Americans to be good citizens of the United States. To Sisters of St. Joseph, conversion to Catholicism was a matter of eternal life or death, for blacks as well as whites. Although foreigners, they also had a vested interest in their work, for they believed their success or failure in obtaining conversions was a factor in their own salvation, and that their efforts as missionaries, including any physical or emotional suffering they endured as a result, gained them great merit with God.

Structurally, the AMA missionary organization and the Catholic hierarchy over the Sisters of St. Joseph were similar. The AMA missionaries’ letters to Secretary Whipple were very much like those the Sisters wrote to their Superiors in Le Puy. Both passed on their observations and related the trials and triumphs they experienced in the unfamiliar surroundings of the American South in the aftermath of the Civil War.

33 *St. Augustine Examiner*, May 23, 1874.
In working with the freedmen, these Protestant and Catholic missionaries also shared a common admiration for the former slaves and disdain for the poor whites of Florida. AMA missionary Emma Eveleth revealed her thoughts in comparing blacks to poor whites in Jacksonville. In regard to a white woman who was in dire condition, she wrote:

I could not help think it is not the color of skin, that makes anyone degraded, but their habits. If people are crushed down all their lives by the heel of oppression can we expect them to rise all of a sudden & be a bright intelligent class of community; without even the dust off their past condition clinging to them? A great many of them do shake it off & get up brighter than would be expected. The jewels are here, and we have an interesting work to polish them up, for this world & I hope, for the world to come. The poor whites seem to be as much – or more degraded and in need than the colored, for the latter are not afraid to work, the others have always thought work degrading; & even now it seems as if they would starve rather than work. There is a hope that when slavery is really dead, & the spirit of caste is banished, they may arise & be equal to the colored people.\(^\text{34}\)

The Roman Catholic Sisters of St. Joseph and the Protestant American Missionary Association teachers and clergy also shared a common weakness in trying to attract African Americans to their respective ministries. Both were confounded by the style of worship most blacks practiced. In despair, Mother Sidonie wrote of the difficulties in competing with the African-American churches in Jacksonville. Some AMA missionaries had a similarly horrified view of black services. According to Joe Richardson, “They viewed services as ‘painful exhibitions of . . . barbarism’ and unfairly branded black ministers as licentious, lazy clowns.”\(^\text{35}\) This inability to relate to African-American culture was a major factor in limiting the success of both the Catholic and American Missionary Association efforts. With the end of Reconstruction in 1877, the AMA suffered a loss of contributions. Northerner philanthropic societies and mission committees in evangelical churches grew tired of supporting the AMA’s missions in the South. The AMA continued its educational work in the South, but its “momentum for full

\(^{34}\text{E.B. Eveleth, Jacksonville, to S.S. Jocelyn, New York, February 4, 1865, ARC.}\n
\(^{35}\text{Letter #31, Mother Sidonie, Jacksonville to Mother Le Superieur, Le Puy, December 18, 1872, ASSJSA; Joe Richardson, Christian Reconstruction, 144.}\)
integration” of blacks into American society had slowed by 1880, and the AMA’s prominence as a rival to the Sisters of St. Joseph was superseded by the Episcopal Church.  

The beauty and ritual of the Roman Catholic liturgy did have an appeal that was missing from most mainline Protestant services, and put the American Missionary Association at a disadvantage. The AMA, however, was not the only Protestant organization that competed with the Sister of St. Joseph’s efforts. Among the Protestants, the Episcopal Church came the closest to providing the same sort of worship experience the Catholic Church offered. It, too, was liturgical and employed ritual. Like the Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church expected its form of worship to attract blacks. Their optimism was tied to the expanded opportunities for education that were available to the freedmen. The 1877 Diocesan Journal for the Diocese of Florida predicted: “With their present and daily increasing ability to read, with their natural and great love of music, with the pleasure it gives them to join in a responsive service, the Liturgy and the chants and psalms of the Church would doubtless take hold upon them and influence them as in past years.”

In spite of its similarities with the Catholic form of worship, like other Protestant denominations, the Episcopal Church was alarmed at the prospect that blacks would be drawn to the Catholic Church. Likewise, Catholics and mainstream Protestant denominations shared an abhorrence of the African-American denominations that were rapidly proliferating during the Reconstruction period. Reports of the state of the Episcopal Church in Florida urged greater outreach to blacks, for, it warned, “If the Church neglects them [the blacks] a few will be hurried into Romanism, and the rest carried sway with the forms of emotionalism which foster the feeling of animal rather than spiritual life of true goodness.”

The leaders of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Florida recognized that one of the major appeals of African-American churches was the opportunity they offered blacks to be

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36 Ibid., 260.


38 Diocesan Journal, 1877, p. 43. Quoted in Cushman, A Goodly Heritage, 139.
preachers and in positions of authority. As early as 1869, Bishop John Freeman Young ordained Richard R. Love, from the British West Indies [the Bahamas], and sent him to Jacksonville. Nothing is known of his ministry, however, and no mention of him appears in the Diocesan Journals after 1870. Twelve years later, Bishop Young ordained another black, Jacob R. Ballard, “to start a mission for his race,” but Ballard’s efforts in Jacksonville to establish a mission also were dismal. Discouraged, he left Jacksonville to head the Florida Negro Normal School in Tallahassee (now Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University) and was able to establish a congregation there.\textsuperscript{39}

Ballard was succeeded in Jacksonville by the Reverend Brook G. White. White was admitted to the Episcopal deaconate on December 19, 1883, and ordained a priest in 1884, specifically to serve a black congregation. An indication of the sensitivity afforded the black members of his flock is the name of the church, St. Philip’s Protestant Episcopal Church. A white congregation in East Jacksonville had been established with that same name a short time before. At the request of Bishop Young, the white congregation gave up its name so it could be used by the newly established black mission, and assumed the name St. Andrew’s instead. The name change was made in consideration of “the peculiar significance St. Philip had for the colored race.”\textsuperscript{40}

Under Father White’s leadership, St. Philip’s Church thrived. In 1885, the church ran an industrial school with seventy-five students, and had plans to establish a parochial school. White was among the many clergymen who ministered to yellow fever victims in Jacksonville during the great epidemic in 1888. He served the church intermittently: 1883-1888, 1895-1897 1900-1904, and 1906-1909. The WPA Church Records show that most of the clergy that served at St.

\textsuperscript{39} Cushman, \textit{A Goodly Heritage}, 139-140.

\textsuperscript{40} Works Progress Administration, Survey of Church Records, Mss on file in the Florida Collection, State Library of Florida, Tallahassee, Florida. Hereafter cited as WPA Church Records. Acts 8:26-39 relates that the Apostle Philip preached the Gospel to an Ethiopian Eunuch, an official in the court of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, resulting in the black official’s desire to be baptized.
Philip’s until 1927, however, was white; but from 1927 to 1935 (the last year covered by the Records), the clergy serving the church were black.\footnote{Ibid.}

The Episcopal Diocese of Florida had recognized the need for separate black parishes with the establishment of St. Philip’s Mission in Jacksonville in 1869, but the congregation did not achieve the status of a parish with its own black pastor until 1882. In St. Augustine, black Episcopalians remained a part of Trinity Episcopal Church, founded in 1763 during Florida’s British Period, until 1891, when St. Cyprian’s Protestant Episcopal Church was founded.

According to the WPA Church Records, Julia Jackson, “a negress from Nassau, who came to St. Augustine during the latter part of 1890, [saw] no place for negroes to worship.” For ten years black Episcopalians met in a private home on Washington Street (in the black Lincolnville area of St. Augustine, on the west side of Maria Sanchez Lake). In 1901, a winter visitor, Miss Emma White, had a church building constructed for them as a gift.\footnote{Ibid.} St. Cyprian’s continues to use this building.

Elsewhere in Florida, the Episcopal Church’s efforts competed with those of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Fernandina, where in 1884, black Episcopalians were given the use of the old building used by the white congregation of St. Peter’s Church; and in Palatka, where a new St. Mark’s Church was built for them in 1883. In addition to churches, Bishop Young also envisioned schools for blacks in his diocese, and black children from St. Philip’s Mission in Fernandina attended an Episcopal parochial school.\footnote{Cushman, \textit{A Goodly Heritage}, 83-84, 140, 187.}

In their letters back to their Motherhouse in Le Puy from 1866-1875, the Sisters of St. Joseph most often mentioned the opposition they encountered from the northern Protestant missionaries, and later, they competed with the local Episcopalians. Their greatest challenge in strengthening Catholicism among Florida freedmen outside of St. Augustine, however, came from blacks themselves. Although their schools fared well, the efforts of the Sisters, and, indeed, those of the AMA missionaries and of the Episcopal Church in Florida all paled in comparison to
the successes achieved by the independent black denominations that sprang up throughout the state after the Civil War and into the twentieth century.

The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church was particularly strong in Jacksonville after Elder Charles H. Pearce arrived in February 1866. Such was not the case, however, in St. Augustine. “To the south at St. Augustine, Roman Catholicism remained a formidable barrier to African Methodism and other Protestant churches. As one local missionary put it, ‘this is a Catholic city.’”

The experiences of Mrs. Hamie Williams-Jordan dramatically show that the Baptists also found the influences of Roman Catholicism to be quite strong in St. Augustine. In 1874, at the age of sixteen or seventeen, she had gone to Lincolnville to raise funds for her church in Tallahassee. She noticed how few Protestant churches there were in St. Augustine.

On a second trip to St. Augustine, while living with a Catholic family, she joined the efforts of a Protestant preacher from Jacksonville, Ivey Barnes, who was trying to establish a church in Lincolnville. They were greatly hampered by strong Catholic hostility to their efforts. There was too much fear to even organize a Sunday School. Because of Williams-Jordan’s persistence in trying to organize a Baptist Sunday School, the black Catholics with whom she was staying no longer welcomed her in their home, though another Catholic family gave her lodging.

When Williams-Jordan went door to door in the neighborhood looking for children to attend her Sunday School, the first mother she approached informed her, “‘Niggers don’t know about conducting Sunday School; only the whites know.” Nevertheless Williams-Jordan


45 Rachel A. Austin, “Negro Churches: Supplement to (W.W. Rice’s Article),” [S.1.: s.n., 193-?], 1. The article is 11 typed leaves bound with Alfred Farrell, field worker, “Negro Churches,” [S.1: s.n., 1936]. This larger work is a typescript compiled as part of the Federal Writers’ Project, American Guide (Negro Writers’ Unit), Tallahassee, Florida, June 10, 1936. On file at the P.K Yonge Library, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida. The information about the First Baptist Church is also available with limited attribution as “Beginnings of First Baptist Church,” interview for the Federal Writers’ Project, WPA, online at http://www.drbronsontours.com/firstbaptist.htm.

46 Ibid., 2.
managed to recruit ten students, mostly Catholic children. They started meeting in a house at the corner of St. Benedict and Francis Streets, and when she added an organ and singing to the meetings, participants flocked to the gatherings. Her Sunday School thrived. The Catholics became alarmed, and as Williams-Jordan recalled,

One night, fourteen banded themselves to destroy ‘Jordan and Barnes’ for they believed that if we were destroyed the idea of establishing a Protestant Church there would be destroyed. At that time, the city gates opened only one way so that seven got on one side and seven on the other side of the gates and waited for us to come from prayer meeting -- they had threatened to take us to the outskirts and beat us to death. Just before we came to the city gate something touched me and said: ‘Go this way’ and we turned and went around by the Abbey House; we had never been that way before, but I obeyed what I later and now believe was the spirit.47

The next night some of those who had intended to attack them came to ask her forgiveness. One even came back the next night and expressed a desire to be baptized and to join the Baptist Church. Despite the fears of the pastor, a public baptism was held. She recalled, “the day of the baptism came – it was held in the pond ‘all were properly dressed and a great crowd of Catholics followed us down to the pond and threw stones at Reverend Barnes; they threw dogs in the boats and did many things to try to stop us, but the baptism went on to the finish . . . After that we got other Catholics in and baptized them . . . .” Even in the face of the violent Catholic opposition, St. Augustine’s First Baptist Church was established in 1874.48

Despite the gloomy portrayal of Protestant prospects in St. Augustine, a survey of church records conducted by the Works Progress Administration during the Depression shows that at least thirteen Protestant black churches of various denominations were founded in or near St. Augustine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and were still functioning in the 1930s. Unless noted otherwise, all listed here were located in St. Augustine. They are, with their date of foundation: St. Paul AME (1873), First Baptist (1874), St. Mary’s Baptist (1875), Mather Perit Memorial Presbyterian (1876), Zion Baptist (1881), North City Baptist (1886), St.

47 Ibid., 3.
48 Ibid., 3-4.
Luke’s AME (1888), St. Cyprian’s Protestant Episcopal (1891), St. James Baptist (1898), Dawson Chapel, Colored ME (1908), Friendship Baptist in Elkton/Armstrong (1910), St. Mary’s AME in Armstrong (1914), and Hurst Chapel AME (1918). 49

Both the American Missionary Association and Catholic Church had “failed to recognize the richness and vitality of black culture and institutions and only belatedly to comprehend black insistence on self-determination.”50 Unless they were already Catholics, most blacks chose to join the rising number of independent black denominations. The 1890 census showed that black denominations were growing. The mainline white Protestants in Duval and St. Johns counties counted 339 Southern Baptists, compared to 1,972 black “Regular Baptists,” and 1,018 Methodist Episcopalians compared to 4,133 black Methodist Episcopalians (African Methodist Episcopalians, African Methodists Episcopalians Zion, and Colored Methodists Episcopalians).51 The Catholic population of Florida in 1908 was about 30,000, of which only 1,750 were blacks. Concerning African Americans, the Catholic Encyclopedia of 1910 reported:

Reliable religious statistics of the coloured [sic] people are difficult to obtain owing to multiplicity of organizations and mobility of religious temperament. Five distinct branches of Methodists report 635 preachers, 400 churches, and 7470 members. Baptist organizations approximate the Methodists in strength, while the coloured [sic] membership of other denominations is very small.52

It is notable that it was not until 1911, in the second decade of the twentieth century, that a separate parish for black Catholics was established in St. Augustine. Unlike the Protestants, Catholics could not act independently of their clergy, and priests could not disobey their bishops. The Catholic Church claimed apostolic succession through its bishops, leading back to St. Peter, the first Bishop of Rome. The succession depended upon consecrations by bishops who had received their own “laying on of hands” from others who were directly “descended” from St.

49 WPA Church Records. Many of these churches are still in existence today. See Appendix B.

50 Richardson, Christian Reconstruction, ix.


Peter. As a result, in the Catholic Church there was no rapid exodus by blacks from the “mother church” to create their own new denominations. After the Civil War, therefore, many Catholic blacks remained in their parishes even though they were forced to sit in segregated areas and were often excluded from activities of the wider church.

The discrimination against black Catholics in St. Augustine was, indeed, longstanding. Since 1565, black Catholics in St. Augustine had attended the Cathedral along with whites, though they were relegated to a separate gallery. On January 5, 1867, the *St. Augustine Examiner* reported that the Cathedral’s black members had held a fair to raise funds to enlarge their gallery. They had raised close to $350. The paper directed its praise, however, toward the whites who had contributed:

> This is indeed good -- nay, very good in a small place like St. Augustine and it bespeaks highly the generosity of the people of the Ancient City. All went nobly to the Fair for the good cause, setting aside all prejudices, and wishing to sympathize with the colored people in an object so laudable as the extension of Church accommodations. The Fair was liberally patronized by all classes of society and the amount raised proves it sufficiently as indeed the scarcity of money in the South is a fact which requires no demonstration . . . ought to go far to prove what some people in the North have so much difficulty to understand, that in the South are yet to be found the best friends of the colored people who are willing to get their hands into their pockets and make sacrifices to come to their assistance.

The fair netted enough to cover the cost of “neat and comfortable pews in the place of the wretched benches they [the blacks] have had hitherto.”53 Whites’ support of black Catholics was indeed vital to improving the blacks’ situation, but their assistance to them was paternalistic and did not represent a desire to truly accept blacks. Their more sincere motive may have been to impress Northerners with their “generosity.” The gallery, with all of its paternalistic and condescending overtones, served the needs of St. Augustine’s black Catholics until 1911.

The success of St. Cecilia’s School, the school built on DeHaven Street for the Sisters of St. Joseph’s instruction of blacks in 1898, spawned the need and desire of St. Augustine’s black Catholics to have a church of their own. Bishop Moore had intended to build a separate church

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53 *St. Augustine Examiner*, January 5, 1867.
for blacks at the Cathedral and laid out a plan for such as early as 1898. Describing the land that had been donated to the diocese he revealed that, in addition to the school building that was completed in 1898, Moore hoped “as soon as possible to build a separate church for colored people and a house for the priests who will attend them. There are 105 Catholic colored families in St. Augustine, as good Catholics on the average as can be found anywhere. I am anxious to do my best for them and implore the help of the Commission to enable me to do so.” Bishop Moore died in 1901 and never got to see his hope fulfilled, but eight years later, on September 19, 1909, Bishop Moore’s successor, Bishop William J. Kenny, laid the cornerstone for the first separate black church in the Diocese of St. Augustine. For St. Augustine’s black Catholics to have their own church was to see a dream long deferred finally realized. As recalled during the Jubilee celebration of the church’s founding: “For some time there existed, on the part of many, the desire for a separate place of worship, as they believed they could develope [sic] better as a separate unit, with their own parish activities to engage in, and their own parish burdens to shoulder.”

Blacks worked diligently to raise the necessary funds. The church was completed in early 1911, and a grand dedication ceremony was held on February 5, heralded by the headline, “St. Augustine Proud of First Catholic Church Exclusively for Negroes – Impressive Dedication.” After the dedication, the first high mass was sung and Bishop Kenny delivered the sermon. Adding to the solemnity and joy of the occasion, the “colored choir rendered excellent music . . . At high mass they sang Farmer’s Mass in B,” under the direction of their organist and conductor.

The dedication of the state’s first Catholic church for blacks brought great joy to the Catholic Church in Florida, for it was a positive sign in the midst of an otherwise dismal record.


55 “St. Benedict the Moor,” Brief History, 26-27.

56 “Negro Catholic Church Dedicated by Dr. Kenny,” Florida Times-Union, February 6, 1911, p 3.
of success among African Americans. In 1912, Father Maurice P. Foley, the Rector of the Cathedral wrote to his Superiors:

Your Graces: The accompanying report of work among our Colored Brethren of this diocese shows that notwithstanding the utmost care and attention on the part of our priests and Sisters comparatively little progress is made in the way of conversions. What few converts we have made during the past year is due principally to the influences of the colored schools. The protestant churches, the Methodists and Baptists especially, are working actively and perseveringly among them and Winter visitors contribute large sums yearly to the aid of the protestant churches.

He went on to say that the Presbyterians had established a parochial Industrial School that provided day care for the young children of working parents. “This appeals to the colored people and some few of our Catholics send their children to them.” Against this grim background, he was indeed happy to report on the growing attendance at the new St. Benedict the Moor Church.

The members of St. Benedict the Moor Church remained under the pastoral care of the clergy at the Cathedral until 1914. Bishop Michael J. Curley, Kenny’s successor, further strengthened the Diocese’s commitment to black Catholics by inviting Josephite Fathers from Baltimore to assume oversight of St. Benedict’s. The Josephite Fathers were members of an order founded in 1866 as St. Joseph’s Society of the Sacred Heart for Foreign Missions in Mill Hill, England, by the Reverend Herbert Vaughan, to missionize the poor, particularly “Negroes.” The first group of Josephite Fathers came to the United States in 1871 to preserve black Catholic faith and to convert unchurched and Protestant blacks.

The Josephites worked primarily in the South, where most African Americans lived, but Church policy frustrated many of their efforts. Although their early intent was to train blacks for the priesthood, over the next five decades only three American black men were ordained: Charles Randolph Uncles in 1891, John Henry Dorsey in 1902, and John J. Plantevigne in 1907.

57 Maurice P. Foley, Rector, Cathedral, St. Augustine, to Your Graces, [1912]. Typed manuscript 3R12 in Records of the Diocese of St. Augustine, on microfilm at P.K. Yonge Library, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

58 Ochs, Desegregating the Altar, 3-6.
All three were ordained in Baltimore, Maryland, the center of Catholicism in the United States; no black priests were ordained elsewhere in the South because of resistance from the Southern bishops. Only when a separate seminary for blacks was established in Mississippi in 1923, were blacks able to study for the priesthood in the South, and it was not until the 1930s that any appreciable numbers of blacks in the region received ordination.  At the Fourth Black Catholic Congress, a gathering of Catholic laymen in Chicago in 1893, the head of the Josephite Fathers in the United States had expressed his frustration, “Is not the Catholic church in America to be blamed for lack of zeal? I answer with an unhesitating Yes. After all Protestantism has done something to Christianize the blacks; but we have done, I may say, nothing.” He then cited the Protestant expenditure of $35 million on evangelism among blacks, the establishment of 130 institutions, and the education of 25,000 scholars “of whom one thousand are preparing for the Protestant ministry.” In 1914, therefore, Bishop Curley’s best option for meeting the needs of the African-American members of his fold was to invite the Josephite Fathers, whose mission was to minister to blacks, to take over the priestly duties at St. Benedict’s.

The black Catholics of St. Augustine thrived once they had their own church. During World War I, St. Benedict’s had its own Local War Council, organized at a meeting held at St. Benedict the Moor School on April 30, 1918. Their pastor, a Josephite Father, was the president, but the other officers were members of the congregation. Committees included: Finance, Men’s Society, Women’s Society, Publicity, Chaplain’s Aid, and Historical Records. The Council was affiliated with the National Catholic War Council. Its purpose was to “render aid spiritual or temporal that might tend to bring solace, cheer and comfort to those who are fighting their country’s cause, and to co-operate with the National War Council in furnishing records of war activities engaged in by our people [particularly black servicemen].” Activities of St. Benedict’s members included working with the Red Cross, leading the knitting and sewing efforts of the Lincolnville Auxiliary Red Cross, providing “pious articles to the boys in camp,” and organizing drills for the children. They reported, “Our first great accomplishment was the farewell given to

59 Ochs, Desegregating the Altar, 3-6, 456.

forty colored members of St. Johns County draft now at Camp Johnston. They were entertained at our school hall [St. Benedict the Moor School] and served cigars and icecream [sic]. The occasion was indeed pleasing to all.”

In 1919, perhaps inspired by St. Benedict the Moor Church, the first black parish in Jacksonville, St. Pius V, was begun. Jacksonville’s black Catholics had been members of Church of the Immaculate Conception, but had experienced the typical “second class” status afforded blacks, separate seating and limited participation. They raised enough money over a period of three years to prompt Bishop Curley to invite Josephite Fathers to start a black parish for them. Josephite Father Michael Gumbleton celebrated the congregation’s first Mass in the schoolhouse located behind Immaculate Conception. He described the parish’s first Christmas Mass: “This is the first time in the history of this city that the Black congregation has had the privilege of seeing their own boys in cassock and surplice assisting the priest at the altar. The first time they hear the voices of their own parishioners singing in the choir . . . .” The congregation grew steadily, and after using a series of successively larger facilities, a church building was finally completed for St. Pius V, and dedicated by Bishop Curley on February 27, 1921. Describing the occasion, Father Gumbleton wrote:

It was one that was looked forward to with much expectancy by the whole parish for a year or more, and an occasion long to be remembered by the Colored People, Catholic and non-Catholic alike; for it was the first time in the enterprising city of Jacksonville that the Right Reverend Bishop Curley of this diocese was called upon to dedicate a church for the Catholic people of the Negro Race. Interest was manifested on every side, for the Colored People of this city felt that there was something to see worth seeing, something to hear worth hearing, and they were not going to miss it.

It was a firm foundation for a congregation that continued to grow and still ministers to the needs of Jacksonville’s black Catholics.

61 War Activities, St. Benedict’s Parish, St. Augustine, Florida, [ca. April 30, 1918] Typed manuscript 4(B)T2 from the Records of the Diocese of St. Augustine, on microfilm at P.K. Yonge Library, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida. The officers were: President: Rev. J.J. Lyons; Vice President: Louis Plummer, Sr.; Treasurer: Miss Lydia Papino; Secretary: Louis Plummer, Jr.; Rec. Secretary: M.N. Fleming.

By 1923, St. Pius’ sister parish, St. Benedict the Moor Church, had about 270 members and the school averaged about 100 students, most of whom were not Catholic. The effort to gain converts, however, was still a struggle. The goal put forth in the account of St. Benedict’s Church history, written in 1923, was that they might at least reach the level of membership reported by Father Henry P. Clavreul, who had worked with Bishop Verot, in 1858: “of the nine hundred ‘colored people in St Augustine fully one half are Catholic.”

Sixty-five years had passed since Clavreul’s cheerful report, however, and the rise of firmly established black denominations had since provided a way for blacks to affirm their dignity and independence in a society that was otherwise controlled by whites. Although blacks happily benefited from the educational opportunities offered by the Church through the Sisters of St. Joseph, most chose to attend a black church under black leadership.

The issues that played such a role in evaluating the successes and failures of Catholic missionary efforts among Florida’s blacks were perhaps best summarized by in the Catholic Review in 1873. Seven years after the Sisters of St. Joseph began their work in St. Augustine and at the height of their competition with the Protestants, a special correspondent to the Catholic Review, identified only as “L,” wrote from Palatka, Florida, stating that he felt Protestantism was inadequate to the task of converting the “Negroes,” but that the Catholic liturgy and piety were useful tools. Typical of his time, the writer revealed a very condescending and racist attitude toward blacks and their intellectual capabilities, saying:

The Catholic church . . . seems peculiarly adapted for work [to] convert, control and elevate such a people as the negroes [sic]. It distinguishes with inimitable clearness the truths of reason and of revelation, defining the mysteries of faith with an explicitness . . . The varying ceremonies and emblems, symbolical of sacred things, attract and at the same time teach the simplest minds.

63 “St. Benedict the Moor,” Brief History, 28.

He claimed that Protestant services were less effective because they relied on preaching, but that blacks could not “readily follow consecutive arguments or retain and apply their logical conclusions.” He argued that the strength of the Catholic Church was its reliance on simple teachings from priests whom congregants knew personally and its emphasis on the sacraments.  

The correspondent acknowledged that the Catholic Church’s progress among blacks had not been “rapid or pretentious.” Most work had been done by local Catholics or by the schools run by Catholic Sisters, whom he praised saying, “this is a pleasing spectacle to see, in a Southern town, the devoted Sisters marshal their neat and orderly little armies on Sundays or festival days and lead them to the church.” This observation reiterated the familiar use of the presence of order and good deportment among blacks as a measure of successful work with them. He also acknowledged something that had become painfully clear to the Sisters, that blacks were drawn to the Catholic Church primarily where there was already a large Catholic presence, and that where there was no such presence, the attraction to black Protestant denominations was strong, largely because of their style of worship:  

where Catholics predominate, particularly among themselves they will readily attend the Catholic church, but where Catholics are in the minority their conversion is difficult and their perseverance uncertain. The shouting and singing ‘gatherings’ of their own race . . . have a great attraction for them, and have drawn away not a few weak-minded Catholics.

Speaking of the large Catholic black community in St. Augustine, L claimed it was because of their faith that they displayed exceptionally good character. He cited a Protestant visitor who had commented, “I have noticed . . . that the negroes [sic] in this place [St. Augustine] are milder in disposition, and more reliable in character than elsewhere. They are given neither to drinking, lying, nor profanity [sic].” Lastly, L focused on the need for black priests, referring to the success of black Protestant churches that had their own black ministers. He ended with the plea, “Let us pray often for our colored brethren, that they may be brought into the Church of God.”  

As demeaning as L’s comments are, they are significant because they point to the two major

65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
reasons the rise of black denominations was so rapid and unstoppable: the power of the black form of worship and the need for black Catholic clergy.

Why did the Catholic Church fail to promote the ordination of black priests when the effectiveness of using indigenous clergy was so obvious? In his study, *Desegregating the Altar: The Josephites and the Struggle for Black Priests, 1871-1960*, Stephen Ochs delineates the major reasons few blacks joined the Catholic Church and some abandoned the faith; all relate to the status of the Catholic Church in America and prevailing attitudes of the American Catholic hierarchy and/or white Catholic membership. First, the Catholic Church was a minority religion in the overwhelmingly Protestant United States. This was especially true in the South. Second, because of the great influx of Catholic immigrants, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, Catholics experienced great hostility and the Church hierarchy did not want to risk greater disfavor by upsetting the status quo. For the same reason, the Church had not taken a political stand on slavery before the Civil War. Third, the Church leaders also feared the disapproval of white Catholics who were indifferent or even hostile to the idea of reaching out to blacks. Fourth, part of the status quo in predominantly white Catholic churches was the practice of segregating blacks in parish life, relegating blacks to separate seating areas and requiring them to take Communion only after the white members had finished. The issue of providing separate seating or separate churches was one discussed at the Second Plenary Council of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore in 1866. Fifth, blacks were also often barred from any leadership positions among the lay groups of such congregations. Sixth, and probably the most detrimental factor in the efforts to maintain black membership in the Catholic Church, was the almost complete absence of black clergy. This was no accident, but a conscious decision of Catholic leadership based on racial biases, as explained by Ochs:

most Catholics, northern and southern lay and cleric, absorbed the widespread racism of American society and regarded Afro-Americans as their intellectual and moral inferiors, incapable certainly of mastering the academic requirements of the seminary or of remaining celibate as priests. The relatively few white Catholics who dealt with Afro-Americans often viewed them as passive children to be supervised and cared for rather than as potential partners and leaders.67

67 Ibid, 2.
Ochs further points out that Catholics considered their priests to be far more than preachers; they were the “mediators between God and humanity” and “messengers of God and dispensers of His mysteries.” In the Catholic mind, such a role could never be fulfilled by men whom they considered to be their racial inferiors, both intellectually and morally.  

In the long run, neither the AMA nor the Catholic Church was successful in developing a strong membership among unchurched freedmen. The Sisters of St. Joseph were successful among those who were already Catholics, especially in St. Augustine, but otherwise, the black community was more drawn to the rising African-American denominations, than they were the elaborate ritualism of Roman Catholicism or subdued traditionalism of white Protestantism. In their own churches, blacks were able to express their emotions freely, and enjoyed leadership from among their own ranks. In spite of the strength of the Catholic Church in St. Augustine, African Americans established nine protestant black churches in that city by 1898. Even today, the American Catholic Church has an extremely small number of black members, due in large part to the Church’s failure to train and raise up appreciable numbers of black priests and bishops. One might conclude that the Sisters of St. Joseph were faced with a losing battle, forced upon them by the Catholic hierarchy. In spite of their adverse circumstances, however, they succeeded in nurturing St. Augustine’s black Catholics who, though relatively few in number when compared to the numbers of Protestants, remain a vibrant part of the black community in the Ancient City, and along with black Catholics in other parts of Florida, contribute to the well-being of the state.

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68 Ibid, 10-11; Davis, *History of Black Catholics*, 120.


70 In 2002, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that in the United States, the Roman Catholic Church, with a membership of about sixty million, had only thirteen black bishops and 350 black priests. Tom McCann in the *Chicago Tribune*, September 2, 2002. Cited in Louie Crew, “Black Priests in the Episcopal Church,” online at http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~lcrew/blkpr.html.
Figure 9. St. Benedict the Moor School in St. Augustine, built in 1898. From McGoldrick, Beyond the Call. Used with permission.
CHAPTER FOUR
FACING THE YELLOW JACK:
THE NORTHEAST FLORIDA YELLOW FEVER EPIDEMICS
OF 1877 AND 1888

On July 28, 1888, R.D. McCormick, a traveler from the Tampa area, arrived in Jacksonville, Florida, and shortly after entering his room at the Grand Union Hotel became ill. Dr. Neal Mitchell, the president of the Duval County Board of Health who lived nearby, was summoned. His initial diagnosis of McCormick's condition was yellow fever, but before making a pronouncement he sought confirmation from other doctors. He called the city health officer and Dr. Joseph Porter, who happened to be visiting him from Key West, to examine McCormick the next morning. Porter was acknowledged as the leading expert on yellow fever in the state, and his confirmation that the transient was suffering from the dreaded yellow fever was extremely alarming. They transferred McCormick by ambulance to the Sand Hills Hospital, located north of town.¹ So began the worst yellow fever epidemic in Florida history.

The fear of yellow fever was well founded, for this disease, whose origins were as yet unknown, could decimate entire communities, and quarantines imposed against towns could cripple their economies. Yellow fever probably originated in West Africa and was brought to the New World through the slave trade. The first recorded epidemics in the New World occurred in the Yucatan (1648) and Cuba (1649). In the 1700s it also struck as far north as New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston. Outbreaks in Florida occurred nearly every two years from 1764 until 1905. After 1825, there were few outbreaks in the North, but the South continued to be gripped by the scourge every summer, though only occasionally did it reach epidemic proportions.²

The South also experienced similar but less harsh maladies, such as bilious fever, remittent fever, and malaria. These "summer complaints" were expected from June to November, and those who could afford it, simply left for cooler, higher climes, such as North Carolina, to avoid the nuisance of dealing with them. Yellow fever, however, was known to kill, and its presence was dreaded. A diagnosis of yellow fever was not lightly made.\footnote{Miller, “Tallahassee the 1841 Yellow Fever Epidemic,” 17.}

Yellow fever is caused by a virus and is contracted by humans through the bite of a female \textit{Aedes aegypti} mosquito which became a carrier by biting an infected person. Once infected, at least twelve days must pass before the mosquito can communicate the virus. The yellow fever virus can be transmitted only by a bite from the infected female; it is not passed on to her offspring or from human to human. The two hosts of the organism, an \textit{Aedes aegypti} mosquito and a susceptible human being, must be available. From the time a bite from a fever-carrying mosquito is received, there is a three to six day incubation period before symptoms appear. If no symptoms are manifested within that time, the person is immune to the disease. A virus that remains in its human host, dies after ten or eleven days. The natural life of a mosquito is approximately two months after breeding, so even if a breeding area, such as stagnant water in artificial containers, is eliminated, the infected mosquito may remain an active carrier of the disease. Likewise, an uninfected female \textit{Aedes aegypti} mosquito can become a carrier by biting an infected person. An epidemic, therefore, will end naturally if all susceptible people are eliminated by death, removed from the area, or become immune through a mild contraction of the disease; or if the infected mosquitoes are eliminated through eradication, freezing temperatures, or expiration of their two-month life span.\footnote{Ibid 19-20.}

Yellow fever is more prevalent in cities than rural areas. One reason is that adult humans are more susceptible to the disease than are babies, and urban areas, with their high concentration of adults, provide plenty of hosts for the virus. Furthermore, the temperature range for breeding...
is 72 to 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit. These temperatures must be exceeded for a long time before
the mosquito is adversely affected. Indoor containers found more commonly in homes provide
the optimal breeding condition for this type of mosquito, and remain within the temperature
range for breeding longer. The bilges of ships are also an excellent breeding environment, and
transport infected mosquitoes from yellow fever regions of the Caribbean to many of America's
port cities. There is no difference in susceptibility to yellow fever according to age, sex, or race.
Cases among young children are usually so mild, however, that they are often not detected. It
was long thought that blacks were immune to yellow fever. By the late nineteenth century,
however, scientists realized that blacks were just as susceptible as any other race, but they rarely
die from the disease. Yellow fever is believed to have originated in West Africa, and the relative
immunity of persons of West African descent may be a result of generations of exposure to the
disease.†

In the nineteenth century, people were unaware of these explanations for yellow fever.
To them, the disease mysteriously broke out in the summer and disappeared after a few frosts.
Populated areas near marshy lowlands were most affected, prompting residents to flee to
elevated, cooler areas every summer. Exposure at night was considered extremely dangerous,
precluding sleeping in the open air or traveling about after sundown. Some thought fog or mists
from marshes caused fever. No sound explanation for the disease existed at that time and it
seemed to strike randomly without regard to class or moral character. Because the spread of
yellow fever cannot be stopped until all necessary factors are eliminated, cleaning cities and
establishing sanitation laws, while certainly beneficial for the general health of a community, no
matter how enthusiastically applied in the nineteenth century, did not curb the disease.

Before 1900, the origins of yellow fever were a disturbing mystery, but the symptoms of
the disease were and remain terrifying. The virus attacks the liver, kidneys, and heart, producing
harrowing physical manifestations. The first indications of the fever are the victim’s feelings of

† Ibid., 20-21; Bloom, Mississippi Valley’s Great Yellow Fever Epidemic, 10-11; George M. Sternberg, M.D.
Researches Relating to the Etiology and Prevention of Yellow Fever. Submitted June 21, 1890, pp. 50-52; Yellow
fever is endemic in Africa between 15˚N and 10˚ S of the equator, an area that includes West Africa. It is also
endemic in the Caribbean and parts of South America. William H. Shoff, M.D. et al. “Yellow Fever,” online at
heaviness and oppression, loss of appetite, and a slight headache, all of which are often disregarded. Violent symptoms, however, follow within twenty-four hours. These can include sudden faintness, giddiness, and chills followed by a fever of 103-104 degrees. Sharp, darting pains leap in the back or cut across the forehead. The pulse goes from very weak to pounding, flushing and swelling the face and neck. The victim's eyes protrude and become extremely red. An intense burning is felt in the stomach, followed by violent heaving of bilious matter that is dark and sometimes bloody. Jaundice, yellowing of the skin, usually appears on or after the third day. These symptoms continue for one to four days and then suddenly stop, only to resume just as suddenly, bringing death in a few hours. A doctor in 1841 reported: "Occasionally, the fatal moment takes place in a convulsive fit. Toward the closing scene the saliva becomes thick, and is easily disengaged and ejected to a distance, and the patient seems as if amusing himself spitting against the wall." "Walking cases" of yellow fever developed very slowly, remaining undetected from two to ten or fifteen days, finally manifesting themselves in one great paroxysm with the heaving of black vomit. After the appearance of this bloody substance that looked much like coffee grounds, there was little hope of recovery.6

Such was the extent of the understanding of the people of Jacksonville in 1888, and why the doctors hoped McCormick's yellow fever was an isolated case they had detected in time. On August 8, however, eleven days after the presence of the disease was first discovered, four more cases were reported. Two days later, the local Board of Health announced that yellow fever, the dreaded scourge, had begun to assume epidemic proportions. People had already started to leave Jacksonville, but with that announcement, panic struck, and citizens used every mode of transportation available to flee the city. All outgoing boats and trains were filled to capacity, and roads were jammed with people in vehicles or on foot. Nearly half of Jacksonville’s 25,000 inhabitants fled.7 Most who left were whites, most blacks being too poor to evacuate.8

6 Miller, “Tallahassee and the 1841 Yellow Fever Epidemic,” 27-28. For a thorough description of the physical manifestations of yellow fever, see Bloom, Mississippi Valley’s Great Yellow Fever Epidemic, 4-10.

When officials in Tallahassee learned of the presence of yellow fever in Jacksonville they declared a quarantine against the city. Other Florida municipalities followed suit, including nearby Palatka and St. Augustine. Fernandina, which had suffered a yellow fever epidemic in 1877, barred all trains from Jacksonville from entering Nassau County, and steamers from Jacksonville were denied entry at Charleston's harbor. Soon cities across the Southeast, including Savannah and Mobile, and others in states as far north as Kentucky and Tennessee, joined in quarantining anyone from Jacksonville.9 Jacksonville established a cordon around the city to keep people from coming and going. This shotgun quarantine required citizens who had left to have passes to return, a common request from businessmen checking on their establishments.10

Those who remained in the city sought ways to protect themselves from the disease, prevent it from spreading, and treat those already stricken. The mayor of Jacksonville was away when the epidemic struck and unable to return because of the quarantines. On August 10, Acting Mayor J.W. Archibald met with representatives from the Board of Trade, the city and county boards of health, the city council, and the county commission. At this meeting, a citizens committee was formed to coordinate efforts to deal with the crisis. The official mission of this committee, named the Jacksonville Auxiliary Sanitary Association (JASA), was to carry out "such measures as are or may be necessary for preservation of life and public health, to prevent the introduction and spread of disease, and to provide for the relief of the destitute."11

On August 16, Florida’s U.S. Senators Wilkinson Call from Jacksonville and Samuel Pasco from Monticello, and Representative Charles Dougherty from Port Orange sent telegrams

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8 A census taken September 6 showed 13,757 remained in city, 9,812 of whom were black. Charles S. Adams, ed., Report of the Jacksonville Auxiliary Sanitary Association of Jacksonville, Florida. Covering the Work of the Association During the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1888 (Jacksonville, Florida, 1889), 34. Hereafter cited as JASA.
that they were seeking speedy passage of a Relief Bill to provide federal money to assist the people of Jacksonville. According to the JASA report, the prospect of federal funds drew “hundreds of colored people from various places” attracted by hopes of “free rations and money.” Reports of problems with “unruly colored people” appeared in northern papers, prompting the creation of a Colored Auxiliary Bureau (CAB).

The CAB, formed by Jacksonville’s leading black citizens on August 29, sought to aid the JASA and to provide assistance and employment to the city’s black citizens and speak in their defense. They created a committee to write a resolution “to be couched in strong and unmistakable language, in refutation of the falsehoods reported in the Northern papers with reference to the colored people here.” Their resolution condemned the negative reports in the press that had claimed “the colored citizens of Jacksonville . . . [were] being organized into bands, breaking into stores and dwellings, and committing other depredations” and published it in the *Boston Journal, New York World*, and *Philadelphia Press*. It read,

> Resolved, that we . . . representing from fifteen to twenty law-abiding citizens, do emphatically denounce the slanders referred to as being entirely false in every particular, and without the least shadow of truth, and that the authors are not our friends. Further, we are prepared to prove that the city was never so quiet and orderly as it is now, and has been since the yellow fever began. The truth is that the unemployed colored citizens are doing now just what they did during the [Civil] war -- nursing the sick, burying the dead, and guarding the deserted houses and property of the whites who have fled.

On September 10, the CAB adopted by-laws and organized four relief committees: finance, conference, labor and information. The CAB worked well. An example of their efforts was their provision of soup for the sick. They also set large numbers of idle and needy

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12 JASA, 17.

13 JASA, 21.

14 *Florida Times Union*, August 30, 1888.

15 *Florida Times Union*, September 11, 1888.
laborers to work improving streets, rather than simply giving free rations. African Americans also served as guards in the cordons around the city. Black clergymen showed great courage and leadership during the crisis. Several were members of the CAB. Some, such as the African Methodist Episcopal ministers Thomas Higginbotham, William W. Sampson, and William P. Ross, who chose to stay in the stricken city to assist their congregants, died from the fever.

After Governor E.A. Perry appealed for federal aid, the city received aid from the Surgeon-General's Office of the United States Marine Hospital Service (MHS), a predecessor of the United States Public Health Service. Joseph Y. Porter, the doctor who confirmed the presence of yellow fever in Jacksonville, was made the Surgeon in Charge of Government Relief Measures. He was to oversee the operation of the quarantines, fumigation, disinfecting, federal aid for operating refugee camps, distribution of free medicine, and the selection and supervision of medical personnel paid with federal funds.

One of the first actions of the JASA was to establish a program to clean up Jacksonville. The Executive Committee ordered citizens to remove refuse around their houses and keep their yards clean. Sanitary agents inspected houses daily, and privies were either cleaned or burned down. Disinfecting crews spread lime on tree trunks, posts, hydrants, curbs and sidewalks. They also burned down some buildings where fever had occurred, then covered the site with the disinfectant. Fumigation brigades treated anything thought to carry yellow fever. Countless mattresses and pillows and upholstered furniture pieces from buildings where yellow fever was found were burned, and the edifices marked with a yellow flag (a yellow jack) to warn others to keep away. Outgoing mail was fumigated as well. Letters were placed in a railroad car that was

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16 JASA, 41.

17 Florida Times Union, October 27, 1888.


divided by a partition in the middle. One end contained wire shelves, where the mail was opened. A small mallet with sharp spikes was used to perforate the mail to create holes to allow fumigating fumes to impregnate the paper. The letters were then placed on the shelves. A large tin boiler with legs about six inches long and filled with sulfur was then set in the shelf end of the car. The sulfur was lighted and the door closed to create an almost air tight space. After about six hours in the fumes, the mail was removed and sent on to its intended recipients.20

Some citizens burned bonfires and kept cauldrons of tar smoldering to "smother the microbes," and others fired five cannons at night, hoping the concussion caused by the explosions would make the microbes collide, thus destroying them. People were to stay indoors at night and to keep their windows and doors shut or covered with curtains. Those who remained in the city must have suffered through the long, hot summer nights, sweltering in their shut up houses, listening to continuous explosions accompanied by the sound of breaking glass, the silence between explosions filled with the clatter of ambulances as the stricken were taken to hospitals, or the sound of death carts as the bodies of those who had perished were gathered. Every form of the senses were assaulted as the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, feelings, and the resulting fears gripped the inhabitants of Jacksonville.21

By September 2, there had been 259 cases resulting in thirty-four deaths. A census taken September 5 showed 13,757 remaining in the city, either unwilling or unable to evacuate. Of those, 9,812 were black and 3,945 were white. Mother Claverie, the head of St. Joseph’s Academy in Jacksonville, wrote to her superiors in Le Puy, France on September 14:

> ... as you know it is a month and nine days that yellow fever is ravishing Jacksonville, every day making rapid progress, new cases are 50 to 70 a day, already a thousand persons prostrated, and of this number, nearly a hundred have died. They are hastening to depopulate the town, without which action, doctors

20 *Florida Times Union*, August 20, 1888. Evidence of this procedure is visible in the punctured letters in the Porter Collection at the Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, and letters at the Archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Le Puy, France.

say that soon there will be a hundred cases daily. Judge then, dear Father, the
general terror.\textsuperscript{22}

By September 18, the total was 1,203 cases and 156 deaths. People who remained in
Jacksonville were at great risk, and the federal, state and local officials had, indeed, concluded
total evacuation of the city was the only way to stop the spread of the fever. For those who
desired to leave, but could not afford to go far, the JASA established refuge camps, assisted with
federal aid. Refugees had to wait out a ten-day period before they were allowed to leave the
Jacksonville area. If they remained healthy, they were free to leave to seek asylum elsewhere.
The first refugee facility created was Camp Howard. This camp for the indigent was located
about two miles north of the city on Moncrief Creek. Although it was equipped with thirty small
tents and a kitchen, and set in pleasant surroundings, it attracted few refugees and closed in
October. Its inmates were sent to Camp Mitchell, located seven miles west of Jacksonville. The
third facility, Camp Perry, was located north of Jacksonville, in Nassau County, near Boulogne,
on the banks of the St. Mary's River. The camps had very few cases of the fever and remained
healthy refuges for the citizens of Jacksonville. There reportedly was only one death in the
camps, for whenever refugees showed any symptoms, they were immediately transferred to one
of the hospitals in Jacksonville for treatment.\textsuperscript{23}

By the end of the nineteenth century most of the harsh treatments of the early 1800s, such
as heavy doses of quinine and calomel, had been abandoned, and more attention was given to
making patients comfortable. During the 1888 epidemic, the Board of Health recommended the
following treatment:

\begin{quote}
Give a hot mustard foot bath with the patient in a chair under a blanket for 15
minutes. After drying under the blanket place the patient in bed with hot water
bottles. Give five grains of calomel to adults and one-half this amount to a child.
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{22} Mother Claverie, St. Joseph's Academy, Jacksonville to Mr. Bonhomme, Canon of Cathedral in Le Puy,
September 14, 1888, ASSJSA.
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\textsuperscript{23} Martin, \textit{The City Makers}, 229-230; JASA, 191; \textit{Florida Times Union}, 24 August 1888; Fairlie, “The Yellow
Fever Epidemic of 1888 in Jacksonville,” 100.
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After 3 or 4 hours give a dose of castor oil or salts, later warm drinks of orange leaf tea. After the medicine acts, give 1/2 teaspoonful of Nitre in cool water every 2 hours, and an enema if necessary. Give a little brandy, whiskey or champagne if the patient is very weak. Give 3 tablespoonfuls of beef or chicken broth or gruel and discourage efforts to vomit.\(^\text{24}\)

Such was the treatment given at the two main hospitals in Jacksonville: the Sand Hills Hospital, a public facility established during a small pox epidemic in 1883, and St. Luke's Hospital, a private hospital established by some prominent ladies in 1871 to meet the needs of transients. During the early stages of the epidemic, the Sand Hills Hospital, located about four miles north of town, received all of the yellow fever cases.\(^\text{25}\)

In the late nineteenth century most of the sick received care at home, and only in the most dire of circumstances was a patient taken to a hospital; they were considered places to die. R.D. McCormick, whose yellow fever was declared the source of the epidemic, however, recovered at the Sand Hills Hospital. Upon his discharge, he cheerfully reported his satisfaction with the care he received there: "Mr. McCormick said the fear which many people have of going to the Sand-Hills hospital is entirely without reason, as the place is high, dry, and reasonably comfortable; the air is pure, patients are provided with comfortable beds, and the best of fare and attention. The patients are carefully nursed and visited by a physician twice a day.” Such testimonies were not unusual. Upon discharge, a patient had to strip and bathe completely with strong disinfectants while their clothes were thoroughly fumigated. After dressing they were free to go wherever they pleased, for those who survived a case of yellow fever were considered immune to the disease.\(^\text{26}\)

On August 21, the *Times-Union* reported the construction of a forty-foot pavilion with a double row of beds had begun at the Sand Hills Hospital. The paper also reported that Sisters of Charity [actually Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine, Florida] had volunteered their services to care for the female ward there after Catholic Bishop John Moore told them of the city’s plight.


\(^\text{25}\) *Florida Times Union*, August 9, 1888; Merritt, 149; Martin, *The City Makers*, 294, f.n. 5.

\(^\text{26}\) *Florida Times Union*, August 13, 1888; August 17, 1888.
The JASA ordered the construction of a house for them adjoining the hospital. Other new facilities included two large floored tents for those suspected of having the fever, and a building where the physician in charge could change his clothes and disinfect himself after his rounds.

St. Luke's Hospital, located on Palmetto Street in East Jacksonville, had three wards, each of which could accommodate seven to ten patients, and twelve rooms that could comfortably hold twenty more. The Board of Health took over St. Luke’s on August 21, when it became clear that it was impracticable to treat patients at home and the Board would have to provide more hospital care.27

Because of its accessibility, the most critical cases were taken to St. Luke's. As a result, patients were often already dying upon their arrival, giving St. Luke's an abnormally high death record. Adding to their difficulties was the fact that their regular resident physician, Dr. A.E. Tyng,28 was out of town during the epidemic. Her absence caused hardship and created a state of panic. The matron of the hospital, a Mrs. Standing, recounted the experience to a reporter:

I shall never forget the horrors of those first two weeks. . . . Our resident physician was called North just at the outbreak of the fever, while we had a virulent case of yellow fever in the house, though at the time of her departure it had not been so conceded.

When it was known in the house that the case was considered suspicious, my help became completely demoralized and most of them fled panic-stricken, leaving me with the violent case of yellow fever, among fourteen other sufferers from other diseases, who all, together with those of us who were well, had been exposed to and were of course liable to become victims of the fever. . . . As soon as the physicians decided upon the case, we were immediately quarantined, which made matters still worse, and for a time we were sorely distressed.


28 Anita E. Tyng, M.D. graduated from the Woman’s Medical School in Pennsylvania in 1864 and practiced for three years at the New England Hospital for Women and Children. While working there, she applied to the Harvard Medical School but was denied admittance because she was woman. She later opened a dispensary in Providence, Rhode Island. No record of when she began her practice in Jacksonville has been found. “Marie Zakrzewska, Medical Pioneer,” Jamaica Plain Historical Society, online at www.jphs.org/people/2005/4/14/marie-zakrzewska-medical-pioneer.html; “Women in Medicine/Czech Feminist Trailblazers,” on line at www.pinn.net/~sunshine/szech/medicine.html
She went on to tell how the doctor substituting for Dr. Tyng fell ill himself, and one of the nurses died. It was during that time that "all those pitiful dying cases" were sent to St. Luke's. She recalled, "One poor soul was covered with black vomit from head to foot when brought in, and only lived twenty minutes. . . . Others lived longer, but their cases were aggravated, and their sufferings more acute by being moved when in such a critical condition, and the air was filled with their dying shrieks and groans." Once the hospital stopped receiving all the terminal patients, the St. Luke’s death rate compared favorably with the rate realized in private homes. By late October, St. Luke's enjoyed a good reputation.29

In addition to these public hospitals, there were some private organizations that provided medical care for their employees or members. The Savannah, Florida & Western Railroad established a place where its employees could sleep and be cared for in a hospital staffed with a doctor and nurses, and the Knights Templar planned to run a hospital in a house in the Riverside area of Jacksonville. The Knights of Honor and Legion of Honor sought to have Dr. Porter serve as a private physician for their members only; fortunately, he declined and accepted the position of overseeing the distribution of federal relief.30

Not long after the epidemic started, it became clear that the local physicians and nurses were not able to meet all the city’s medical needs. The JASA sent out a call across the nation for doctors and nurses to come assist the local effort, and on September 5, the city issued a public appeal for financial aid. Responses came from all over the country and even from overseas, and on September 6, some of the funds were used by the JASA to establish a Committee on Nurses and Medical Attention. Dr. Porter was in charge of the selection and oversight of the doctors and nurses who would be paid with federal relief funds.

Because the city's hotels and boarding houses were closed, the Committee supplied food and lodging for the visiting or "foreign" doctors and nurses who worked either at the hospitals or were dispatched to private homes from a central station on Bay Street. Prospective physicians had to present their credentials to the Board of Health. If accepted, they received assignments to

29 Florida Times Union, August 21, 1888 and October 27, 1888.
30 Florida Times Union, August 16, 1888; September 11, 1888.
districts or were simply placed on call. They initially received ten dollars a day. After some
dispute concerning payment for the local doctors as well, a rate of $150 a month was awarded to
all physicians employed by the Board of Health, though some doctors refused payment. In
addition to eleven local doctors, eighteen physicians came from other Florida cities, Missouri,
Mississippi, Texas, Ohio, Kentucky, Alabama, South Carolina, Alabama, and Georgia. Many
became sick themselves; five died. One, Dr. L.T. Eddy from Louisville, Kentucky, had arrived
in Jacksonville only sixteen days before his death.\(^{31}\)

In addition to hiring doctors, Porter also received all applications for nurses. The main
qualification sought was immunity to yellow fever, but training was also desirable. Organized
nursing, an emerging profession for women at the end of the nineteenth century, was born in the
United States in 1872 with the founding of the New England Hospital for Women and Children,
in Boston. By 1880, there were sixteen nursing schools with 323 students in the United States.
Spelman College provided some nursing courses for blacks in 1886, but little other training for
African Americans was available until the 1890s. Early in 1888, a nursing school was
established at St. Luke’s Hospital.\(^{32}\) Nurses, black and white, generally only performed support
services, usually under strict oversight by a physician. Typical duties included applying plasters;
giving carbolic acid gargles and enemas; administering rectal feedings; cupping, and leeching.
Nurses were not permitted to answer patients' questions about their condition and were required
to refer them to their doctors. A primary qualification for nurses was the ability to obey orders.\(^{33}\)
In 1898, Dr. R.D. Murray wrote in his discourse on the treatment of yellow fever:

The more ignorant, if obedient, the nurses the better. . . . The nurse should have
only sense enough to obey orders. Dumb nurses would be ideal in all critical or
extra critical cases. . . . I know of too many preventable, but not prevented, deaths
due to strife between physicians and nurse; unfortunately in some instances the

\(^{31}\) JASA, 132-139; Florida Times Union, September 29, 1888; Martin, The City Makers, 243.

\(^{32}\) Florida Times Union, October 2, 1888.

\(^{33}\) Darlene Clark Hine, Black Women in White: Racial Conflict and Cooperation in the Nursing Profession, 1890-
doctor was to blame in being careless in giving directions. I know of some cases sacrificed to the zeal of a nurse who “knew more than all the doctors.”

Although this attitude may not have been held by all physicians, compliance with doctors’ orders was crucial. Some of the most effective nurses were the Catholic nuns who took care of soldiers during the Civil War, and "doctors preferred women religious [nuns] who were generally capable of following directions with discretion but who were also experienced in initiating independent judgment and managing institutions" when necessary. They were “disciplined, organized and would calmly volunteer for the dirtiest, most difficult tasks.”

Such may have been the thinking when the Sisters of St. Joseph from St. Augustine volunteered their aid during the epidemic. They were readily accepted, probably based on the service they had rendered during the yellow fever epidemic in Fernandina, Florida, in 1877. According to a special report to the Catholic Mirror, a national publication, yellow fever had entered Fernandina by way of sailors whose ship from the West Indies had entered the port there in August 1877. For some reason, the crew was not quarantined, and the sailors had freely gone ashore. The epidemic began slowly, and at first was not recognized, perhaps out of ignorance, or perhaps out of an effort to preserve the healthy reputation of the city. Nevertheless, between August 28 and September 8, yellow fever struck down four in a single family. The sickness in the Bordeaux Family began with the father, who was a cabinet maker, and his twelve-year-old son, Leon. The two had been frequently aboard the Ana, a ship in the port, working on a job both day and night. Leon fell ill on August 25th and died on the 29th. His father showed signs of the fever on August 28th and succumbed on September 3. The Bordeaux mother and another of their children then fell ill and died within the week. According to the Catholic Mirror, the Bordeaux Family died “in great agony with symptoms of virulent yellow fever.” The fever

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continued to spread throughout the city, especially in Old Town Fernandina, an area near the river.\textsuperscript{37}

Even though most people who were able had fled the city in terror, abandoning the stricken, the Bordeux Family had not died alone, for Catholic Sisters of St. Joseph were with them. Bishop John Moore, informed the Sisters, who were gathered at the Motherhouse in St. Augustine from their various communities in Fernandina, Jacksonville, Mandarin, and Palatka, for their annual retreat, of Fernandina’s plight. He asked them, “Are the Sisters ready to go to assist the sufferers?”\textsuperscript{38} The four Sisters who were based in Fernandina, returned to the stricken city about September 1st. They were: Mother Célenie, superior of the house; Sister Marie de Sales; Sister Xavier; and Sister Mary Louise. They found a desolated Fernandina, with empty homes and businesses and deserted streets. A peculiar odor filled the air, perhaps from fumigation efforts. Not stopping to go to their house, they went immediately to the bedsides of the fever victims, remaining with them and nursing them, taking turns around the clock. They also cared for the bodies in death, preparing them for burial themselves, as everyone else was too terrified to assist them.\textsuperscript{39}

The Sisters assisted Protestants and Catholics alike, and were greatly appreciated and admired. One Protestant doctor said, “You have, my Sisters, more courage than a soldier on the battlefield: this one goes to his death on the road to glory, pushed by the prestige of ambition


\textsuperscript{38} Records, Sisters of St. Joseph , St. Augustine, Florida, 1866-1937, MS680, ASSJSA.

\textsuperscript{39} Jacksonville \textit{Weekly Florida Union}, September 15, 1877.
and honor, but you, you go to it by way of the greatest test, and standing up to the most horrible in nature, to fly to the assistance of suffering humanity! Oh, noble ladies!”

Mother Célenie, though sick herself, continued to nurse another victim. On the night of September 16 to 17th, the other Sisters took her back to the community house in Fernandina, where Sister Marie de Sales had just died. Three Sisters from the Jacksonville house arrived in time to be there when Mother Célenie died within eight hours of Sister de Sales’ death. Two other Sisters came, Mother Julie Roussel from the Mandarin house, and Sister Augustine Verot from St. Augustine, but arrived too late, and could only assist at the funerals. In retrospect, Sisters recalled Mother Célenie’s and Sister de Sales’ behavior at the retreat they were attending in St. Augustine when they learned of the epidemic in Fernandina. Of Mother Célenie, they said, “there was something celestial about her.” She had told Mother Sidonie, superior of the house in St. Augustine, “I feel that I will not see you again.” Sister de Sales had said, “Mother, bless me, I am going to my death. So long, until Heaven!”

Sisters from the other houses in Jacksonville and St. Augustine went to Fernandina to replace the two fallen Sisters: Sisters de Chantal, Helen, and Mary Ann. All told, five additional Sisters contracted the disease, but survived; all recovered by October 23rd.

Fernandina’s yellow fever epidemic ended after the first frost of the season appeared on November 30. The city’s population was about 3100: about 1300 whites and 1700-1800 blacks. Approximately 1100 whites remained in the Fernandina during the summer, but many of them fled at the onset of the epidemic. At the height of the sickness, there were 518 whites and 1014 blacks remaining in the city. Among the whites there were 478 cases of yellow fever, resulting in 75 deaths, a 16 percent mortality rate. Among the blacks, there were 934 cases,

40 Congrégation de Saint-Joseph Du Puy, Religieuses Décédées, Depuis le mois de Juillet 1877 jusqu’au de Janvier 1878, ASSJLP.
41 Ibid.
42 Catholic Mirror, [1877], n.p.
43 Jacksonville Weekly Florida Union, December 3, 1877.
resulting in 20 deaths, a two percent death rate.\(^{44}\) As reported in the *Catholic Mirror*, “The sisters and priests are more justly appreciated in Fernandina since the epidemic than before. All classes and creeds benefited from their labors and sufferings, and all now join in their praise.”\(^{45}\) So it was after Catholic Sisters nursed soldiers during the Civil War, and so it would be in Jacksonville in 1888.

The fever broke out in Jacksonville shortly after the Sisters’ annual August retreat. Four sisters from the community house in St. Augustine went to nurse patients at the Sand Hills Hospital, while Sisters from the Jacksonville house served at St. Luke’s Hospital and visited the sick in the city. Among the Jacksonville Sisters was Sister Mary Ann, who had nursed during the Fernandina epidemic eleven years before. Sister Rose de Lima, a native of France, worked at St. Luke’s, “putting up prescriptions.” Before the end of the month, on August 28, after three days of sickness, she was dead. Her loss was a shock to the Sisters. Mother Claverie, the superior at St. Joseph’s Academy in Jacksonville, wrote to the Canon of the Cathedral in Le Puy of Rose de Lima’s death and lamented that, after her death, five other Sisters, as well as an orphan living at the convent in Jacksonville, had “fallen under the clutches of that malignant fever.” Trying to reconcile herself to the ongoing tragedy, she wrote: “I try to resign myself to the holy will of the good God, Father, . . . I do not consider our dear sick ones out of danger. We can say only ‘Fiat.’ If only we were together there would be some consolation; but no, we are all scattered. . . .” It was some comfort that Bishop Moore, himself, who had summoned the Sisters to aid yellow fever victims as he had eleven years before, also went to Jacksonville to minister to the needy. Mother Claverie wrote, “The Bishop is tireless and his goodness toward the sick poor is admirable; how edifying it is to see a Bishop alone, on foot, going to the dying to bring Last Sacraments.”\(^{46}\)

\(^{44}\) Horsey, “Report of the Yellow Fever Epidemic at Fernandina,” 72. Statistics concerning the epidemic vary. In his 1971 article, William Straight reported that Fernandina had a population of 3,000, and suffered 1,612 cases of the fever, resulting in 95 deaths, a mortality rate of 5.9 percent. Straight, “Yellow Jack,” 45.

\(^{45}\) Two priests also served, Fernandina’s Father Augustine Spandonari, until he fell ill and was replaced by Father J.L. Hugon from Tallahassee. *Catholic Mirror* [1877], n.p.
Bishop Moore bore witness to the tireless work and sacrifice performed by the Sisters of St. Joseph and himself in a letter he wrote from Jacksonville in the midst of the epidemic:

This city is now one yellow fever hospital. . . . We have plenty to do. There is a hospital at the Sand Hills nearly four miles from the city. . . . We have three Sisters there doing well. We also had three Sisters in St. Luke’s hospital but Sr. Rose de Lima died of the fever and Sr. Jane Francis is now down with it, but is doing well so far; we have however some fear for her as she is not strong. Sister Marie Louise is there doing heroic [?] work; she is strongly and compactly built and is thoroughly healthy, she bosses [?] the patients and the[y] all want to have her around them. . . . Eight orphans [at St. Mary’s Home, an orphanage in Jacksonville established by Sister Mary Ann] have gotten the fever. . . . Sister Mary Ann was in bed for two days from over work but had no fever. She is every where [sic] hunting up the sick and doing all she can for them. She gets plenty of work for Father Duffo [a priest assisting the Bishop] and myself.

Thus the Sisters and bishop nursed and ministered to the people of Jacksonville throughout the epidemic.

Just as the Sisters of St. Joseph had been praised for their work during the Fernandina epidemic, the Sisters who nursed patients at the Sand Hills Hospital were lauded. In his report, Dr. Sollace Mitchell, administrator of the hospital, declared, “I must name those devoted Sisters of St. Joseph who have worked so nobly night and day for these many weeks, refusing pay. The many Sand Hills patients will not soon forget Sister Josephine, Sister Elizabeth, Sister Gerasim and Sister Agatha, and I wish to give them my personal thanks.”

The Sisters of St. Joseph were welcomed, but some of the other nurses who came to Jacksonville caused considerable problems and their legacy stands in stark contrast to that of the Sisters. One set was a group sent by Harry Miner, a theatrical manager from New York. Miner

46 Mother Claverie, St. Joseph’s Academy, Jacksonville to Mr. Bonhomme, Canon of Cathedral in Le Puy, September 14, 1888, ASSJSA.

47 Bishop John Moore, Jacksonville to Dr. Pace, Philadelphia. September 12, 1888. Diocese of St. Augustine Papers, Microfilm Reel 2, on file at the P.K. Yonge Library, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

had offered to send trained nurses and to pay for their salaries and transportation, only asking if they could be provided accommodations and how many were required. The JASA accepted the offer and asked for ten nurses. Nine men and one woman came and set to work. Because the agreement was based on Miner's offer to pay the nurses, they were not placed on the government payroll. Soon, the nurses applied for aid, for Miner refused to pay them, pointing to an agreement they had signed in New York to provide free services. After protracted negotiations, the JASA paid the nurses an average of forty dollars each, even though, with two exceptions, all were “sick with the fever, and averaged but a few days of actual service apiece.” Problems in settling the issue remained long after the epidemic.49

Even more vexing than the Harry Miner nurses were Red Cross nurses who came to assist the stricken city. Clara Barton, President of the American Red Cross Association, offered to establish a Red Cross headquarters in Jacksonville, and the Surgeon-General strongly recommended the offer be accepted. The American Red Cross Association, which had been created only seven years before, had assisted people suffering from forest fires, floods, cyclones, and famine, but had never dealt with an epidemic before. The Old Howard Association in New Orleans united with the Red Cross with the express purpose of providing nurses for the yellow fever victims. Barton accordingly offered the Surgeon-General of the Marine Hospital Service "all nurses that could be required, even to hundreds, all experienced and organized for immediate action.” Barton’s own lack of immunity and prior commitments precluded her going to Jacksonville herself, so she called upon an old associate, Colonel F.R. Southmayd, the secretary of the Red Cross Society in New Orleans, to raise a group of nurses to go to the stricken city. Thirty, including both women and men, white and black, volunteered. Many had had experience with yellow fever before.50

The quality of the Red Cross nurses, however, was generally very unsatisfactory and some were found to lack moral character, their selection seemingly based solely on their

49 JASA, 146-148.

immunity to the fever. Scandals involving the nurses included: a male nurse who stole two blankets and some towels from a hotel and assaulted a doctor, some who were inattentive to their patients, several who were charged with drunkenness while on duty ("one having snatched an alcoholic medicine from the lips of his suffering patient"), one who absconded with Red Cross funds, and several who were "branded as prostitutes and ordered to leave town."  

Stories about the "Drunken Red Cross Nurses" published in the *New York World* enraged Colonel Southmayd. He already had been at odds with the JASA, saying accounts of the yellow fever were exaggerated and that the local restrictions were too confining. He felt that "though the relief organizations, under Surgeon J.Y. Porter, were made up of 'earnest, warm-hearted workers,' they were badly in need of organization," and proceeded to try to organize them himself. Although Southmayd’s opinions were perhaps justified, his actions offended the local officials.  

The problems with the nurses were significant, but Southmayd's own behavior and criticism of the local officials had become intolerable. Porter wrote Barton asking her to "confer a favor on me by withdrawing Southmayd. He is a hindrance to me in my official capacity." She did as he asked, and sent Dr. Julian B. Hubbell to investigate the controversy. He concurred with Southmayd, saying the "'great yellow fever Epidemic' was a scare and farce combined." After Southmayd's departure, Porter investigated the nurse situation himself. Several letters in his correspondence testify to the problems reported in the newspapers. One doctor said, “a small minority might be called skillfully trained nurses.” Although there were difficulties with the Harry Miner nurses and the Red Cross, most nurses during the epidemic did noble service, and the problems with a few overshadowed their good work.  

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52 Pryor, 255-256.

53 JASA, 147; Pryor, 256-257.
total of 837 nurses were enrolled; 397 were white (47%) and 440 were black (53%). About 200 of the 837 were local nurses, and two thirds of the total were women.  

The long awaited frost finally came on November 25, 1888, and the last recorded death occurred December 5. By December 8, only one yellow fever patient remained at St. Luke's Hospital. On December 12, the epidemic was officially declared over, five and a half months after it began, and the quarantine of Jacksonville was lifted on the fifteenth. After the city was fumigated, those who had fled joyfully returned. Those arriving at the depot were greeted by other citizens with banners reading "Welcome Home," "Jacksonville Greets You," and "No Microbes on Us," and by a full brass band playing such tunes as "Dixie," "Annie Laurie," and "Johnnie Get Your Gun."  

The 1888 Jacksonville yellow fever epidemic was a major catastrophe for the city. The fever was widespread across the South that year, but Jacksonville, Florida's leading industrial city and a rising resort, suffered the most, with at least 4,696 cases, resulting in 430 deaths. Many who evacuated did not return, and Jacksonville's population fell from 25,000 in 1888 to 17,201 in 1890, not recovering to its pre-epidemic level until 1900. Many of Jacksonville's most capable leaders died in the epidemic. Economic losses resulting from the quarantine and deaths of businessmen were also heavy.  

Although Jacksonville had suffered yellow fever epidemics in 1857 and 1877, neither of them approached the magnitude of the 1888 epidemic. Fortunately, 1888 was the last year Jacksonville suffered from yellow fever; the last major epidemic in the country was in 1905. Concerted efforts to eradicate the mosquito vector, and the development of a vaccine in 1938 finally eliminated yellow fever as an annual scourge in the United States.  


56 Straight, “Yellow Jack,” 45; Martin, 251. According to T. Frederick Davis, History of Jacksonville, 185, there were 4,704 cases, with 427 deaths (324 white, 103 black). The count is uncertain, and could have been as high as 5,000 cases, with 500 deaths, Martin, 297, f.n. 76.  

Yellow fever struck across most of the Southeast in 1888, but the news of the epidemic in Jacksonville had gripped the nation. Disaster relief efforts had been massive, and citizens from as far away as New York and Ohio had sent monetary aid and supplies or had come themselves. The unfortunate experience with some of the Red Cross nurses left its mark on the association, tarnishing its reputation and causing Clara Barton to resolve never again to entrust a major relief effort to anyone but herself. Her refusal to delegate authority hindered the development of the American Red Cross until her death. The mark of the 1888 experience with the Red Cross remained on Jacksonville too. During the Spanish American War, two Red Cross nurses assigned to Jacksonville were not allowed to work under the Association's badge because the locals still considered Red Cross nurses to be disreputable.\(^{58}\)

There were positive results too, however. Dr. Joseph Y. Porter emerged a hero. Mr. D.W. Onley, president of the CAB, and Jacksonville’s black community were also commended for their work, and it was hoped that a new era of better racial relations would follow.\(^{59}\) Not long after the epidemic, newly elected Governor Francis P. Fleming convened a special session of the Florida legislature to establish a State Board of Health; Porter was its first director, and in 1897, the Marine Hospital Service modeled refugee camps in New Orleans and Mobile after Jacksonville’s Camps Howard, Mitchell, and Perry.\(^{60}\) Despite the problems cited with a few medical personnel, the doctors and nurses who served during the epidemic were heroic as well. Among the most lauded were the Sisters of St. Joseph, who lost three Sisters to yellow fever during the 1877 and 1888 epidemics. Their sacrificial ministries to care for the stricken, black or white, Protestant or Catholic, did much to gain them the esteem and appreciation of the people who lived in Fernandina and Jacksonville, both largely Protestant communities. The good will their efforts engendered would serve the Catholic Church well in later years, when promoters of anti-Catholicism would seek to undermine the Church’s work in Florida.

\(^{58}\) Pryor, *Clara Barton*, 256.

\(^{59}\) All these and several others were commemorated in *Ye Heroes of Ye Epidemic* by One of Ye Heroes, T.O.S., (Jacksonville, FLA: DeCosta Printing and Publishing House, 1888).

Figure 10. Bishop John Moore. From McGoldrick, *Beyond the Call*. Used with permission.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY,
THE END OF THE FRENCH MISSION TO FLORIDA

The yellow fever epidemics were crises that broke into otherwise calm days as the Sisters of St. Joseph pursued their primary missions of education and helping the needy in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, the Sisters’ academies and schools for poor whites and for blacks that dotted the northern half of the diocese were thriving. In 1905, the Sisters of St. Joseph established St. Catherine’s Academy and a convent in Miami; it was their tenth foundation. In St. Augustine, the free schools the Sisters had established in the early days had become part of the public school system in 1878. St. Agnes School, an extension of St. Joseph’s Academy, was established in North City, a suburb of the Ancient City just north of the City Gates and Castillo, in 1889. St. Benedict the Moor School for African Americans in St. Augustine’s Lincolnville area was completed in 1898. The Sisters began offering annual Teacher Training Institutes in 1890. The free schools and academies in Mandarin, Jacksonville, Fernandina, Palatka, Elkton (southwest of St. Augustine), Orlando, and Ybor City were going strong.¹

In 1889, under the direction of Sister Margaret Mary, the students at St. Joseph’s Academy in St. Augustine began publishing *Pascua Florida*, a cross between a newspaper and magazine. It remained in publication through 1908. It included news of the students’ and Sisters’ comings and goings, compositions, historical sketches, excerpts from other Catholic publications, and reports on special events. *Pascua Florida* provides a window into daily life at the convent school for the girls who boarded there, and for the girls and boys who attended the day school. In giving his permission for the publication of the magazine, Bishop Moore wrote to Sister Margaret Mary, the principal of the academy:

I heartily approve your purpose of permitting the pupils of your Academy to publish periodically their own juvenile compositions. I trust that the undertaking will produce all the good results you expect from it. Your scholars should be stimulated to take greater care with their tasks, by the foreknowledge of the fact that they are to be printed, and thereby exposed to the criticisms, even though indulgent, of their friends and of the public, who will read them.²

The compositions in *Pascua Florida* display a high quality of writing, and an advanced level of maturity in thought and expression developed through the students’ Saturday task of writing an essay in an hour and a half. An essay by Florida Latimer expresses one student’s views on who should have the right to vote. Her “Should Voting be Made Compulsory?” decried the enfranchisement of the uneducated, and then went on to discuss whether women should vote:

And I understand you think that women should vote. I beg your pardon. I must differ with you on that point, too. You say they ought to have more say about the government and the electing of officers. I think a lady’s place is at home, and not running around on election day, to the poles [sic], as the men do; they spend the day there. Suppose the women would do the same. I most decidedly think that a woman has no business voting. Now, just let me ask you one question – What would become of the babies at home if all the women would get that crazy notion into their heads? Yes, I know few have but don’t judge all by a few. Now, would it not look nice to have a lady president, and all the senators and representatives women, not but that some would make as good public officers as the men, still I am afraid that they would think more of the fashion than they would the good of the nation. [In Europe] they say that this [American government] is a very good government; but the reason it is so good is because it is run by the American women, as all men are influenced by the women. Let us women keep that power of influence by the keenness of our judgment and the nobility of our lives and let the men do the voting.³

Impressive, too, are the topics that were debated in formal competitions that were often judged by the Cathedral priests. Arguments presented in the debates were sometimes printed in *Pascua Florida*. Examples are: Should Woman Ride a Bicycle? Have Savages a Right to the

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² *Pascua Florida*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (October 1892), 1. The Bishop’s Approbation was printed on the first page of each issue.

Soil? Which is More Important, the Army or the Navy? Inventor or Discoverer? Who was the Better General, Washington or Napoleon? Which is more Useful, the Printing Press or the Steam Engine? Such exercises served to develop critical thinking among the students. The magazine also included pieces on the merits of Catholic education, emphasizing its attention to the whole person, intellectual, physical, and spiritual; and articles with patriotic themes, especially in regard to the Columbian Exposition and the Spanish-American War.

Under nineteenth- and early twentieth-century religious rules of decorum, women religious were not to call attention to themselves; bishops were the mouthpiece for the Catholic Church on public matters. Although Pascua Florida was a student magazine, in a way it provided a voice for the otherwise “voiceless” Sisters of St. Joseph. The magazine’s articles, many of which addressed ideals such as appreciation for nature, care for the poor, and social responsibility, were prepared under the watchful eyes of the Sisters, and show the influence these women religious had in shaping the thinking of future adults who would be able to influence public policy.

Throughout Pascua Florida, whether in formal essays or chatty comments on the latest news, the students at St. Joseph’s Academy displayed an ease with adults; the students and Sisters shared warmth and respect for each other. Part of the high regard for the Sisters was perhaps a result of the students’ exposure to them in daily life and the students’ participation in the ceremonies at which young women entered the convent as postulants or took their vows as novices or professed Sisters. Pascua Florida regularly reported on such events. An impressive ceremony for the reception of novices, those who had completed their initial trial period as postulants, took place on April 24, 1892. The service began at 6:30 am in the candlelit chapel decorated with flowers and plants. As the Wedding March was played, three students dressed as bridesmaids processed down the aisle toward the altar, led by another student carrying a processional cross. Following the bridesmaids, in order, were the novices, the professed Sisters, and the two young women who were to make their profession. Those two were distinguished by their white veils laced with orange blossoms. Lastly came the Mother Superior and her assistant.

The Bishop then delivered a short inspirational talk to the new novices. After two years, a novice could be considered for acceptance as a Sister and make temporary vows; perpetual vows were taken some years later.\footnote{Pascua Florida, Vol. 2, No. 7 (November 1890), 6-7; Ibid., April 24, 1892; Jane Quinn, The Story of a Nun: Jeanie Gordon Brown (St. Augustine: Villa Flora Press, 1978), 175-178. Quinn provides a detailed description of the profession ceremony at which a novice took her temporary vows.}

It is true that Sisters, as a rule, did not actively recruit their students for the Sisterhood. Indeed, many of their students were not even Catholic. Nevertheless, including students in such milestone ceremonies in the life of the Sisters was quite intentional. The Bishop directed his homily toward the newly professed women, but his words also fell on the ears of the students. His verbal encouragement and the visual beauty of the ceremony surely made a strong impression on some of the girls, as revealed by a student reporter of one such ceremony. After giving the names of the “aspirants for the holy habit” (postulants) and the novices who made their profession of vows, she wrote: “The ceremony was impressive throughout, and the address of the Rt. Rev. Bishop on the occasion was well calculated to inspire a spirit of love and esteem for the religious life.”\footnote{Pascua Florida, Vol. 10, No. 1, (October 1898), 10.} Although the convent schools were, indeed, a major source of young women to enter the religious life, the Sisters sought only those who felt truly called to God’s service, and did not seek young women carried away by romantic ideas inspired by impressive ceremonies.

Most girls who went to convent schools graduated and went on to be married and raise families; occasionally, however, some entered the religious life, while others went on to attain exceptional achievement in the wider world. The lives of three alumnae from St. Joseph’s Academy serve as examples of the impact the Sisters’ training could have in molding exceptional lives.

Cora L. Bostick was the editor of Pascua Florida, and in 1892, she won the gold medal for her essay, “The Valiant Woman.” After providing a historical review of women in ancient times, she asserted that women had always been noble, but Christianity brought that nobility to light. She acknowledged the greatness and nobility of men, but held that
the courage and nobility of woman holds a stronger power over the destinies of life, than that of man. Man and woman cannot be judged by the same rules; there are many radical differences in their natures. Man is the creature of interest and ambition; his nature leads him forth into the bustle of the great world, there he can figure in many ways; but woman’s whole life is a history of those gentler qualities which she needs must practice at home. . . . Thus we find that the kind and elevating influence of the valiant woman, is ordained by Omnipotence, to conquer rebel natures when everything else has failed. We find her on the battle-field, we meet her in the prisoner’s gloomy cell; and often her gentle acts of charity and patience, are the only light which sheds its effulgence upon youth, and throws a halo around old age. Her happy Influences in many cases, glorifies [sic] the present by the light cast backwards, and brightens [sic] the future by the gleams sent forward. . . .

Cora’s essay reflects the traditional ideals of domesticity held up before women in nineteenth-century America. In May 1895, three years after her graduation, Cora wrote her friends at the Academy that she was shortly “to be robed in the habit” of the Order of the Precious Blood, a cloistered order dedicated to prayer, in Brooklyn, New York. In October 1896 Pascua Florida reported that she had made her perpetual vows.

Jeanie Gordon Brown presents a slightly different example. She was born September 7, 1886, into a “well-to-do upper class family” in Scotland. Her mother died from complications after the birth of Jeanie’s sister, Nony, in 1889, four days after Jeanie’s third birthday. Jeanie attended a private school for girls in Scotland. In 1894, her father left to establish a new home for them in Hypoluxo, Palm Beach County, Florida. He sent for his sons to join him in Florida in 1897, leaving eleven-year old Jeanie and eight-year-old Nony with their tutors and nannies in Scotland. He brought them to Florida, after he had remarried, in September 1902. Jeanie was sixteen years old, Nony thirteen. The girls lived for a short time in Hypoluxo, but because of the

9 Pascua Florida, Vol. 6, No. 8 (May 1895), 9 and Vol. 8 No. 1 (October 1896), 9.
rustic conditions and inadequate schooling available there, Mr. Brown sent his daughters to attend boarding school at St. Joseph’s Academy in St. Augustine. Jeanie attended from 1903 until 1906. In 1904, Nony, who had always been frail, had to leave school and died that year.¹⁰

Jeanie felt “safe and well taken care of” at the convent, finding comfort in the restrictions and rules enforced by the Sisters. One of her classmates described her as being “always intent upon reading, and [having] genial, lady-like ways. Contentment and happiness are written on her face, which is in striking contrast to the dreamy, melancholy expression of another of our boarders.”¹¹ Jeanie was greatly drawn to the Sisters’ Catholic faith and way of life, and they were impressed with her. Much to her Protestant family’s disapproval, she converted to Catholicism and was baptized on March 18, 1907. She taught in public school in Palm Valley, a small community in St. Johns County, north of St. Augustine, until she was 21, for at that age she could legally enter the convent without her father’s permission. On March 19, 1908, Jeanie Gordon Brown received the veil and her religious name, Sister Theresa Joseph.¹²

Over the years Sister Theresa Joseph taught at several of the Sisters’ schools, beginning at the academy in Jacksonville. Having already been sent to summer school at Catholic University from 1915-1919, in 1925 she was among the first group of Sisters of St. Joseph from the Diocese of St. Augustine who earned bachelor’s degrees in education from the University of Florida. That same year she obtained a Florida teacher’s certificate.¹³ She was a respected teacher and administrator. In 1927, Theresa Joseph was made principal at St. Joseph’s Academy in St. Augustine, and in 1931, she was sent to Orlando, where she was principal of St. James School and the Superior of its associated convent. Two years later, on May 3, 1933, she became an American citizen.¹⁴


¹¹ Ibid., 71.

¹² Ibid., 102, 110-111, 121, 127, 130.

¹³ Ibid., 224-225.

¹⁴ Ibid., 230-233, 278, 357.
Jeanie Brown, a Presbyterian boarding student at St. Joseph’s Academy in St. Augustine who converted to Catholicism and became a nun, steadily rose in the ranks of the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine, and was elected the Mother Superior of the statewide congregation in 1937. She held the post until 1945, when she returned to teaching, this time at the academy in Coral Gables. While there, she earned a masters degree at the University of Miami in administration and supervision in 1952, at the age of 65. She was the first member of a religious order to complete that degree at the University of Miami. In 1959, Sister Theresa Joseph fell ill and died from colon cancer on August 19, 1960. Her academic pursuits demonstrated the growing willingness of the Catholic Church to invest in women religious by giving them opportunities to gain professional credentials.

Sister Theresa Joseph Brown was a rising star among the Sisters of St. Joseph, but the alumna of St. Joseph’s Academy who was probably the most well known to Floridians was May Mann Jennings. May was born in New Jersey in 1872, and in 1874, her family moved to Crystal River, Florida. Her father, Austin Shuey Mann, became a state senator and exposed his daughter to the exciting world of politics at an early age. Linda Vance, May’s biographer, notes, “From the beginning, Mann’s eldest daughter [May] was his favorite. He never excluded her from adult activities or discussions, and he never assumed that there were some things she could not do because she was a girl.”

May’s mother died in 1882 from tuberculosis and, some felt, also from the grief of the death of two of her youngest children. Austin Mann was left a widower, with two older boys; May, age 10; and another sickly daughter, Gracie, age 3. Unable to care for the girls, he enrolled them into St. Joseph’s Academy in St. Augustine in 1883. Like some other students, they were not Catholic, and retained their Baptist affiliation. Sister Lazarus L’hostal was the Mother Superior of the convent and Sister Margaret Mary was the principal of the academy. They became “May’s mentors and counselors” and maintained a relationship with her for many years.

15 Ibid., 234, 281, 402.
According to Vance, “the steadying influence of the nuns at the convent gave May equanimity and poise that she carried the rest of her life.”

Life at the convent school was strict, but the Sisters were mild and parental in their discipline, emphasizing good morals and proper behavior. The Prospectus of St. Joseph’s Academy described the Sisters’ standards: “strict adherence to correct and refined language, polite deportment, gentle and engaging manners at all times, mandatory attendance at all public exercises, the observance of silence except in the hours of recreation, no visits home during the entire year, the subjection of letters and packages to inspection, and the prohibition of private friendships.” Such a restrictive atmosphere perhaps sounds oppressive by today’s standards, but was consistent with what was expected at a school for fine young ladies, and for many, such as Jeanie Brown, it created boundaries that provided a measure of security and comfort.

Besides academics, the boarders received lessons in plain sewing, embroidery, and other kinds of needle work, including French lace-making. The making of bobbin lace, a special skill the French Sisters brought with them from Le Puy, was one of the ways the Sisters supported themselves in the early days of the Florida mission. The lace was very popular with St. Augustine’s winter visitors and its sale to them provided a fair income. Some of the students took up the intricate skill. The Pascua Florida reported that one apparently very patient girl was “progressing rapidly with her French lace. She averages an inch every two weeks.” In later years, May was known for her fine needle work, including lace making. The girls were not confined to the convent, but enjoyed picnics, hikes to North City, an area north of St. Augustine’s City Gates, and occasional trips to the beach and the St. Augustine lighthouse. For those who embraced the experience of convent life, their days at St Joseph’s Academy produced many fond memories.

Ibid., 7-10.

Ibid., 10, 12. Although the Prospectus called for “no visits home the entire year,” May went home on holidays and over the summers.

May was one of the most outstanding students ever to attend St. Joseph’s Academy. She was consistently listed on the monthly honor roll. This was no small accomplishment, requiring a score of 100 percent in all studies, conduct, and neatness; and attendance at all exercises.\footnote{\textit{Pascua Florida}, Vol. 8, No. 1, (October 1896), 9.} According to Vance, May excelled in music, piano, voice, art, English composition and French, and received gold medals at the end of her junior and senior years. The range of courses May studied at the academy was comprehensive, embracing the major fields of religion (catechism and church history), English (etymology, rhetoric, grammar, logic, literature, composition, mental philosophy, and classics), social sciences (geography, ancient history, Middle Ages history, modern history, and civic government), science (science, chemistry, botany, geology, and astronomy), and mathematics (mental and practical arithmetic, algebra, and bookkeeping).\footnote{Vance, \textit{May Mann Jennings}, 14.} With such a curriculum, many academy graduates were broad in their views and articulate in expressing them. Later in life, May credited her wide-ranging interests and capabilities to her days at St. Joseph’s: “I was educated in a convent and I look at life through much broader glasses than the average person does.”\footnote{May Jennings to Carrie McCollum, April 30, 1915, in May Mann Jennings Papers, Box 5, quoted in Vance, 10. May Mann Jennings Papers, P.K. Yonge Library, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida. Hereafter cited as MMJ Papers. I was unable to locate this letter.}

May spent six years at St. Joseph’s Academy, from age 11 to 17, and graduated in 1889, the valedictorian of her class. After one year of postgraduate work there, she returned home to Brooksville in 1890 to assist her father with his political career. It was he who introduced her to William Sherman Jennings, a Brooksville lawyer and judge with political aspirations. Jennings and May were married on May 12, 1891. The event was announced in the \textit{Pascua Florida}: “Our esteemed friend and scoolmate [sic], Miss May Mann, was married on the 13 ult. [sic] in Tallahassee, Fla., to Judge Jennings, a well known and prominent lawyer of Brooksville.”\footnote{\textit{Pascua Florida}, Vol. 2, No. 14 (June 1891), 10.}
For the next ten years, May, William, and their son led a genteel life in Brooksville together, actively supporting their Baptist church at local and statewide levels. William developed a highly successful law practice and engaged in profitable business dealings. In 1892 and 1894, he was elected to the State legislature, where he rose in popularity and esteem among his fellow legislators. In 1898, he was chairman of the Democratic state convention. For her part, May became involved in the woman’s club movement and worked to improve the Brooksville community. In 1899, she helped Jennings in his campaign to be elected governor. Her natural talents, honed to highly effective tools of persuasion at St. Joseph’s Academy, served her and her husband well, for as one newspaper put it, “There is little doubt that the rise of young Jennings was promoted by his marriage to May Mann, a lady of great charm [who] inherited much of her father’s political ability. She was just such a person who would impress all those who came in contact with her, just such a one as would prove a most fitting helpmeet to a husband who had both ability and political ambitions.”

Jennings won the gubernatorial election and took the oath of office on January 8, 1901.

The Sisters of St. Joseph were duly proud of May. The day after the inauguration, Sister Margaret Mary, May’s principal at St. Joseph’s Academy, wrote the new governor’s wife:

You have no idea of the degree of laudable pride which fills my heart for the happiness which is yours. I am happy to think that others look upon you as I do, that others know you as I do, and that your merits, becoming known [to] others, esteem you as I do. May God bless you dear child and may you continue to give honor to the Academy which gave you the Christian education which you enjoy. Always bear in mind while carrying your honors that charity to the poor will entail a blessing on your household, and that while honors are conferred upon you, you must refer them all to God who is the author of all . . . Never neglect to thank God for the blessing which He has given you, and daily beg Him for new favors; lead a life worthy of a true woman, and thus while you glorify God you will be a credit to yourself and an honor to [illegible word].

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25 Sr. Margaret Mary, St. Joseph’s Academy, Jacksonville, to Mrs. W.S. Jennings, [Tallahassee], January 9, 1901. MMJ Papers, Box 1.
May heeded Sister Margaret Mary’s advice and did support the poor and needy personally or through her growing work with woman’s clubs. Her papers are full of requests for assistance. May graciously, but carefully, responded to such letters. She often helped people through her influence, but usually refrained from supplying money directly.

In a more public role, May was a leader in the woman’s club movement and tackled major issues, such as conservation, social welfare, and women’s rights. In 1914, she was unanimously elected the president of the Florida Federation of Women’s Clubs and played an important role in the establishment of the Florida Park Service, the Florida Forestry Service, and Everglades National Park. In 1924, she was a candidate for President of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, the national organization. Much as candidates running for political office, May promulgated statements of her stands on various domestic and international issues, many of which are still of concern in the twenty-first century. She was very clear concerning women’s rights. Although she supported the woman’s right to vote, she was “unalterably opposed” to the federal constitutional amendment, known as the “Blanket Amendment,” which said: “Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States, and every place subject to its jurisdiction.” In May’s opinion, “[The amendment] would either repeal or make inoperative all special and Federal legislation for the protection of women and children, sponsored by women, [and] organizations covering a period of many years work, and would be of exceedingly doubtful benefit otherwise.” One can easily imagine such topics being debated in Pascua Florida.

The training May received at St. Joseph’s Academy admirably prepared her for her life of leadership. Comments by her contemporaries or biographers describe someone who embodied the core ideals promulgated by the Sisters: “her popularity was enhanced by her unfailing gentility and decorum,” or “Mrs. Jennings shows a marked degree of disregard of cliques . . . In fact fairness is one of the attributes that has been most salient in all that she has done. She is approachable at all times.” May’s biographer, Linda Vance, sums it up best: “May’s education

26 For a detailed discussion of Jennings’ club work and positions on issues, see the previously cited biography by Vance, May Mann Jennings.

27 “Mrs. Jennings’ Stand on the Most Important National Issues,” MMJ Papers, Box 23.
at St. Joseph’s fitted her for a public career; it reinforced her protective attitude and strengthened the sense of public duty that she had received from her father. The genteel but sound academic training and the moral and emotional stability she received at the school inculcated characteristics important to her future.”

May Mann Jennings died in 1963, at the age of 90, having heeded Sister Margaret Mary’s exhortation to “lead a life worthy of a true woman.”

Thus, the Sisters of St. Joseph’s academy work contributed to the development of women willing and equipped to take places of leadership. One of the brightest lights for the Catholic Church in Florida at the turn of the twentieth century, however, was not an academy graduate, but a simple nun who had led her entire life of devotion in Florida: Sister Mary Ann. She was one of the Sisters of Mercy who came to Florida in 1859, the first group of women religious who came to the state. She was a “true woman” of a different sort.

Born in Ireland in 1828, Ellen Hoare, like so many other young Irish women who were caught in the dire poverty brought about by the potato famine in Ireland, came to the United States in 1848. She came to New York City to join an uncle and his family, only to find out they were moving to the West and had no room for her. Destitute and alone, she was able to get work as a maid. Although abandoned by her uncle, by chance she found her sister who had come to the United States a few years before. Together, they practiced their Catholic devotions at daily Mass. Ellen was engaged to be married, the date was set and all preparations had been made, when she felt God’s call to become a nun.

29 Ibid., 143.
30 Sr. Margaret Mary, St. Joseph’s Academy, Jacksonville, to Mrs. W.S. Jennings, [Tallahassee], January 9, 1901. MMJ Papers, Box 1.
Determined to follow the call, Ellen went to New Haven, Connecticut, where she attended night school at the convent of the Sisters of Mercy. Her cheerful disposition and devotion soon showed her to be an ideal candidate for entry into the religious community. In 1858, she entered the convent of the Sisters of Mercy as a novice.\(^{32}\)

It was at about this time that Bishop Augustin Verot asked the Sisters of Mercy from the Diocese of Hartford to send Sisters to teach in St. Augustine. Ellen was among the Sisters of Mercy who arrived in the Ancient City on April 1, 1859. She was still a novice, but after completing her novitiate she publically professed the traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and received her veil as a Sister of Mercy from Bishop Verot at the Cathedral in St. Augustine on August 15, 1861. Along with the veil, she received the religious name of Mary Ann. Because of her limited education, Sister Mary Ann was admitted as a lay Sister to perform domestic duties and ministries to the poor and the sick, rather than to teach.\(^{33}\)

Care for the “sick, the friendless, and the needy” was, indeed, Sister Mary Ann’s calling. During the Civil War, she helped care for soldiers, both Union and Confederate. She tended them at the hospital in Savannah, and after the Battle of Olustee that took place near Lake City, Florida. According to Edward Keuchel, there is no actual documentation that Sister Mary Ann was at Olustee or Andersonville, but all accounts at the time of her death mention her work at these sites. Further support for the veracity of these claims is the recognition Sister Mary Ann received from the United Daughters of the Confederacy.\(^{34}\)

When the Sisters of St. Joseph arrived from France after the Civil War, in 1866, they depended on the Sisters of Mercy as they adjusted to their new surroundings and tried to learn English. Sister Mary Ann’s duties included doing the laundry every week for both the Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of St. Joseph. She had begun a special relationship with the French Sisters


\(^{34}\) McLaughlin, “Jacksonville’s Angel of Mercy,” [21]; Edward F. Keuchel to Sister Mary Denis Maher, C.S.A., Ursuline College, Pepper Pike, Ohio, November 29, 1989. Copy of letter held by the author. Dr. Keuchel graciously gave me his entire file on Sister Mary Ann.
during the early days after their arrival. They had been eating their meals with the Sisters of Mercy. Unaccustomed to Southern food, they often left the table hungry. In later years she would tell “how she watched the Sisters of St. Joseph . . . with the greatest sympathy; she instinctively felt that they were hungry, as they really were; she often went to the pantry and carried bread to them, which they gladly accepted.”

In 1869, when the Sisters of Mercy left St. Augustine, Bishop Verot asked Sister Mary Ann to remain to assist the French Sisters. It was to be only for a year, but at the end of that time, Verot decided she should remain in Florida and become a Sister of St. Joseph. Obediently, Sister Mary Ann permanently transferred to the Sisters of St. Joseph on August 15, 1869; it was the eighth anniversary of her entry into the Sisters of Mercy. Although she had a warm relationship with the Sisters of St. Joseph, it pained her deeply to leave her beloved Sisters of Mercy.

On November 15, 1869, Sister Mary Ann was among the Sisters of St. Joseph who left St. Augustine to establish a new community in Jacksonville, where she spent the rest of her life ministering to the poor and needy. Her energy seemed endless as she nursed victims during the yellow fever epidemics in 1877 and 1888, contracting the disease herself; provided meals, clothing, spiritual comfort, and simple friendship to the condemned prisoners in the Duval County jail; and prepared holiday meals and distributions of provisions to the poor. In 1898, during the Spanish-American War, Tampa was a major staging area for sending troops to Cuba. The Sisters of St. Joseph in Ybor City assisted soldiers who were stationed or hospitalized in the Tampa area. Jacksonville was the site of Camp Libre. Soldiers from the camp, many of whom were suffering from typhoid, received hospitalization at the Sisters’ beach house at Pablo Beach, near Jacksonville. A visitor to the hospital, who later wrote a history of the New Jersey military units, reported finding “three cheerful faced Sisters of Charity [St. Joseph] in the kitchen, headed


36 Sister Mary Albert, S.S.J., Archivist, Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine, to Edward F. Keuchel, November 14, 1986; McLaughlin [28-29].
by Sister Mary Ann, . . . cooking delicacies and nourishing soups for the sick boys of the Second New Jersey [Volunteers].”

Sister Mary Ann’s greatest and longest lasting accomplishment, however, was the establishment of St. Mary’s Home for orphaned girls. In 1885, on one of her visits to the county hospital, a little girl whose mother had recently died, clung to Sister Mary Ann, begging her to take her home with her. The result was the establishment of an orphanage for girls, long one of Sister Mary Ann’s dreams. When others learned of the proposed orphanage, contributions poured in, due in large part to the good will and trust Sister Mary Ann had developed among those who knew of her other good works. In 1886, one of the local newspapers included this testimony of the mark she had made on Jacksonville:

Every city, every town, and in fact every locality, points with pardonable pride to its greatest philanthropist. Many great communities cannot boast of these personages, but Jacksonville comes conspicuously to the front in this respect, and “Bears away the palm.” No city can point to a nobler or more benevolent woman, or one who has accomplished any greater good than Sister Mary Ann. No Protestant in Jacksonville will deny that she has in thousands of homes, been a ministering angel. Everybody knows this most remarkable woman, and no little boy or little girl lives in this city who has not heard of the noble deeds of the good Sister Mary Ann, as she is affectionately [sic] called. . . . The writer, although a Protestant [,,] could fill volumes with her benevolent deeds . . . .

Her whole life has been a continuation of visits to the sick and the providing of food for the hungry and clothing for the naked. Benevolent men in Jacksonville . . . always cheerfully give to the Sister Mary Ann, because they realize that it will be spent in the most judicious way and placed where it is most needed. She is daily visited by people seeking alms, and no one has ever been refused. . . . this is her life work, and not an hour passes in the day but what she performs some act of loving kindness. Little wonder that everybody loves her.38

St. Mary’s Home opened on August 15, 1886, an auspicious day in several ways, for it was the anniversary of Sister Mary Ann’s profession as a Sister of Mercy and of her transfer to

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38 McLaughlin, “Jacksonville’s Angel of Mercy,” [39-40]. A reference in the larger quote indicates this probably appeared in the Metropolis.
the Sisters of St. Joseph. The facility was a modest, wood frame, two-story house. There were five little girls in residence. In 1890, supporters provided a three-story, brick building, with room for twenty-five orphans. There, the girls were taught basic academic subjects, catechism, and a skill that would enable them to support themselves. One little girl, for example, stayed at St. Mary Home for twelve years, leaving in 1897 with an education and skills in dressmaking. She married and had a family.\textsuperscript{39}

Sister Mary Ann enjoyed preparing meals for the girls and taking them on picnics. The girls affectionately called her “Grandma.” The Jacksonville \textit{Florida Times-Union} delighted in reporting on these and Sister Mary Ann’s other works of charity, and the Home received support from Protestants as well as Catholics. The paper often included Sister Mary Ann’s detailed accounting of the donations she had received; such a report was a front page story even in the midst of the 1888 epidemic. Although a “lay sister,” and never the Superior of St. Mary’s Home, it is clear she carried much authority. In 1899, she travelled to the North to raise money to expand the Home. Her successes there provided enough funds to construct a new wing.\textsuperscript{40} It was in the midst of these positive ministries that tumultuous change came to the Sisters of St. Joseph. The general public was unaware of the strife that was tearing the Sisters apart.

By the late 1800s, the Sisters of St. Joseph were well established in northeast Florida. Their schools, black and white, were highly regarded, and they were even paid by some county school boards to teach in public schools. The care of yellow fever victims during the 1877 and 1888 epidemics gained them the respect and gratitude of Protestants and Catholics, blacks and whites. Sister Mary Ann’s ministrations to orphans, prisoners and the poor of Jacksonville earned her the moniker, “Jacksonville’s Angel of Mercy.”\textsuperscript{41} The days of public ridicule and whispers of “nigger Sister “were gone for the most part. The Sisters had lived through those days, and the work among the blacks for whom they had been sent by the Motherhouse in Le Puy was largely a success, at least with black Catholics.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., [38].

\textsuperscript{40} “For the Orphans,” \textit{Florida Times-Union}, September 2, 1888, p. 1; McLaughlin, [52].

\textsuperscript{41} Keuchel, Sister Mary Ann, 97-113.
The Sisters had gained the respect of the people of Florida, but women religious in general during this time also enjoyed increased respect within the Catholic Church. On December 17, 1890, Pope Leo XIII issued a decree, *Quemadmodum*, intended to protect members of religious communities, male and female, from Superiors who would pry into the consciences of those who were subject to their authority. Although religious could grow in their efforts toward spiritual perfection by discussing their thoughts with their Superiors, such inquiries concerning those thoughts were solely the responsibility and prerogative of a religious’ designated confessor and were to be made within the confines of the Sacrament of Confession or Penance. The decree was directed against Superiors who abused their authority by forcing or pressuring their subordinates to discuss matters of conscience, sometimes even taking it upon themselves to prevent or limit the subordinates’ access to Holy Communion. The Pope ordered all such misuse of authority to cease, no matter how long it may have been a common practice within a congregation. The Pope was emphatic, forbidding “absolutely such Superiors, Male and Female, no matter what may be their rank and eminence, from endeavoring, directly or indirectly, by command, counsel, fear, threats or blandishments, to induce their subjects to make them any such manifestations of conscience, and he commands these subjects on their part to denounce the higher Superiors such as done to induce them to make such manifestations.”  

Failure to follow this decree subjected the Superiors themselves to incur excommunication. The Pope ordered that the decree be translated into the vernacular, incorporated into organizations’ constitutions, and read at least once a year at a stated time in each house, at a full gathering of the body “in a loud and intelligible voice.”

In 1895 or 1896, Bishop Moore set October 15, the Feast of St. Teresa of Avila, as the day the decree was to be read annually in each religious community in his diocese. As it turned out, that day was already filled with other activities at the St. Augustine house which made it difficult to gather everyone together. Mother Lazarus L’hostal, who had been the Superior in St.

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43 Ibid., 279.

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Augustine since 1886, asked if the reading could be postponed, and suggested the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus in January of each year, as an alternative. Moore agreed, saying, “Provided that it be read once a year, that suffices.” It became the regular practice for the priest who led the Sisters’ annual retreat in August to read the decree and explain it to all in the congregation.\textsuperscript{44} This decree became a major factor in the history of the Sisters of Joseph’s Florida Mission.

With their past accomplishments, little prepared the Sisters for the devastating blows they received in the fall of 1899. On the morning of November 14, Bishop Moore sent a note to Mother Lazarus in St. Augustine that he would be coming to the convent at three o’clock to speak to the entire community. Mother Lazarus and he had always had a warm, cordial relationship, and he usually let her, as the Provincial Superior, know the nature of his visits. This time he did not. At three o’clock, Bishop Moore and the Chaplain at the Cathedral came to the convent chapel and prepared for the meeting, still without any explanation to Mother Lazarus. Once everyone was assembled in the chapel, Bishop Moore formally read from a large paper:

I had given orders to Mother Lazarus that the Decree of the Holy Father \textit{Quemadmodum} was to be read every year to the Community on the Feast of St. Teresa. This order has not been carried out. Mother Lazarus has not read the Decree of the Pope: she is disobedient. In the presence of all the community she is deposed from her position and she is excommunicated by the disobedience to orders from the Pope. She will no longer fill any position in the community. I appoint Sister Eulalia Ryan in her place. Again I claim and it is ordered, as before, that the Decree be read each year to the community on the Feast Day of St. Teresa under pain of papal excommunication.\textsuperscript{45}

With no further comment, the Bishop and priest then left the chapel. Stunned by this totally unexpected pronouncement, Mother Lazarus followed them out, and on her knees, asked Bishop Moore if she would be barred from receiving the Sacraments. He replied that she would

\textsuperscript{44} Sister M. Lazarus L’hostal, Fall River, Massachusetts, to Rev. Mother, Le Puy, September 28, 1908. Hereafter cited as Lazarus, 1908, ASSJSA. Mother Lazarus wrote this account at the request of her Superior nine years after the events. She was seventy-four years old.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
be denied them, but told her to go to confession and to obey whatever her confessor told her to do to repent sufficiently.\footnote{Ibid.}

Excommunication is a serious penalty, reserved for heretics, anyone who treated the consecrated Communion bread and wine sacrilegiously, a confessor who violated the privacy of Sacramental confessions, and someone who “procures a successful abortion.” An excommunicated person could not receive communion or participate in other public worship ceremonies, receive the sacraments, govern or hold any church offices.\footnote{John A. Hardon, S.J., \textit{Pocket Catholic Dictionary} (N.Y.: Image Books, Doubleday, 1985), 137-138.} As a result of her removal from office, Mother Lazarus was ordered to present all the community’s money before Bishop Moore and turn it over to her successor, Sister Eulalia.

Ten days later, Mother Lazarus was summoned to the convent parlor where Bishop Moore furthered the devastation by announcing to her that all ties between the Sisters of St. Joseph in the Diocese of St. Augustine and their Motherhouse in Le Puy were severed, and that she should tell the other French Sisters of the new arrangement. Moore did not order her to go back to France or to leave the diocese, but he did require her to leave St. Augustine. Her request to go to the Mandarin community, near Jacksonville, was denied. She was ordered, instead, to go to Ybor City, over two hundred miles away. It was the furthest house from St. Augustine, and the one with the most challenging ministries.\footnote{Lazarus, 1908. See Chapter Two, “Notre Chère Mission d’Amerique” re the Ybor City Mission.}

Mother Lazarus left for Ybor City on November 24, 1899, with direct orders not to visit any of the other Sisters of St. Joseph communities along the way. In her new position, she was a teacher for the youngest children in the Ybor City mission. The recorder for the Ybor City community wrote: “[Mother Lazarus] bears her heavy cross with a patience that is truly remarkable, but we are all a little embarrassed with her. Having looked up to her so long as our...
Superior, it is very difficult to treat her as a simple Sister. There is an unavoidable constraint in our intercourse. . . .”

Although Mother Lazarus graciously and humbly accepted her situation and enjoyed her new assignment that was free from the responsibilities of leadership, she was greatly torn as to what she should do – should she stay in the diocese she had served for 32 years or return to the welcoming and comforting arms of her Superiors at the Motherhouse in Le Puy? Mother Eulalia, her appointed successor, implored Mother Lazarus to stay in Florida for at least another year at the same time the Reverend Mother in Le Puy was inviting her to return “home.” The situation was tearing all of the Sisters apart. What effect would her leaving have on the Florida Mission? Would other French Sisters, who held the positions of leadership, leave too? Would it damage the Sisters’ reputation among the communities and with the public, or destroy the foundations they had worked so hard for thirty-three years to establish?

Mother Lazarus sought the advice of priests, but few ventured to give her any definitive direction. Her inner turmoil ended finally when she learned that Bishop Moore felt it best, because of the divided loyalties that were emerging among the communities, for her to return to France. That confirmation was all she needed. She said, “From that moment all my doubts and perplexities were calmed in thinking I was doing Holy Obedience. It is a great consolation in religious life to be directed by Superiors.”

Plans for the return to France commenced. On April 27, 1900, Mother Eulalia, the Sister thrust in to the middle of the controversy when Bishop Moore appointed her to replace Mother Lazarus, wrote the Reverend Mother in Le Puy. She said:

It is needless for me to say that I am sorely grieved at parting with our good and devoted religious. They have been long our models and their example and virtue will be missed by us, as long as life lasts, . . .

It is truly heartrending for us to be forced to separate from our beloved Sisters and Superiors with whom we spent many happy years in true religious affection.

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49 Annals of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Ybor City, p. 45, ASSJSA.

50 Lazarus, 1908.

51 Sister M. Eulalie, St. Joseph Academy, St. Augustine, to Very Rev. Mother, Le Puy, April 27, 1900, ASSJSA.
On May 3, 1900, Mother Lazarus and four other French Sisters left the Florida Mission to go to Le Puy. Three were Superiors of communities: Mother Louise Claverie Chambouvet (one of the founding Sisters), Mother Louise Theresia Romeyer, Mother Marie Josephine Deleage (one of the original founding Sisters who had gone to Florida in 1866), and Sister Constance Degeorges. On July 19, 1900, Sisters Onésime Vedrine and Octavie Fabre also departed for Le Puy. The recorder for the Sisters’ house in Jacksonville described the departure of the French Sisters with a note of resignation and finality: “They will leave Fernandina [where they had gathered from houses around the state] for New York on May 3d, thence to France[,] never to return.” Other French Sisters followed suit over the years. Of the twenty-two French Sisters in the Florida Mission in 1899, eleven returned to France.

In the confusion wrought by these events, some of the remaining French Sisters considered the possibility of establishing a new foundation in a different diocese. Several bishops had requested their services, but the one that seemed most promising was in Fall River, Massachusetts, an industrial town with a large French-Canadian population. In May 1902, Sister Louise Antonia Marconnet, the Superior over the community in Fernandina, and Sister Eusebie Bouchet, the Superior in Mandarin, went to Fall River to explore the suitability of this new mission field. Mother Antonia wrote the Reverend Mother in Le Puy enthusiastically:

I really cannot enumerate all the ways in which the arrangements are just great; it is simply incredible what this good father [Father Giguere, the priest who had invited them to come to Fall River] has accomplished in the three years only that this parish is in existence.

Father wants everything to be in French and they are doing their best to conserve it in this way, but the state law requires that English be taught and that is why he has asked you for one or two Sisters with the English language. . . . I would never

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52 Record Book, Jacksonville, p. 35, quoted in Quinn, Story of a Nun, 83.

be able to tell you how well we have been received. It is plain to see they love the French.\textsuperscript{54}

Fall River also promised to be a fertile field for gaining new subjects. The needs of Fall River were great, more than the Sisters in Le Puy could handle, but it was a successful mission for many years. The last French Sister went from Le Puy to Fall River in 1903, and died in 1966.\textsuperscript{55}

Although the Fall River mission was a blessing to the Sisters of St. Joseph, one must ask how the tumultuous break between the Florida Mission and the Motherhouse in Le Puy came to be. As stated before, the work of the Sisters was progressing well when the heretofore fatherly Bishop John Moore suddenly turned on Mother Lazarus. Years after these events, Mother Lazarus was still confounded by the Bishop’s change in attitude toward her, saying, “Monseigneur Moore had been a good and devoted Father to us; in my difficulties I used to go to him without fear; he was my support.”\textsuperscript{56} The best explanation for the Bishop’s radical change is that late in the summer of 1899, he had suffered a stroke on or about September 7, 1899, in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, while on a “begging tour” in the North. He was partially paralyzed and spent the next six weeks at a hospital in Baltimore, returning to St. Augustine on October 22.\textsuperscript{57} Moore continued to lead the diocese, but the stroke had “had a devastating effect on his energy and personality.”\textsuperscript{58} Three weeks later, on November 14, he humiliated and deposed Mother Lazarus from her position as Superior General for the Sisters of St. Joseph throughout the diocese, and nine days after that he severed the Sisters’ ties to their Motherhouse in Le Puy.

\textsuperscript{54} Sister Louise Antonia, Providence, RI, to Madame Pélagie [Rev. Mother Pélagie Boyer], Le Puy, May 2, 1902, ASSJSA.

\textsuperscript{55} Table of Sisters of St. Joseph, Sisters of St. Joseph Archives, Le Puy. Copy at ASSJSA. Sisters of St. Joseph still serve in Fall River.

\textsuperscript{56} Lazarus, 1908.

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Florida Times-Union and Citizen}, September 8 and 11; October 18 and 22, 1899.

Moore wrote Mother Pélagie Boyer on November 23, declaring to her that the relationship with Le Puy was ended. Mother Pélagie responded on December 14, 1899:

I have the honor of acknowledging your letter of 23 November in which Your Excellency informs me that henceforth all connections are broken between the Community of St. Joseph in Florida and the Motherhouse in Le Puy.

The blow which strikes us is assuredly very unforeseen; nevertheless we are accepting it with an entire submission to the designs of Divine Providence.

The consequence of the action you have judged appropriate to take is that our French Religious may return to France, if they wish.

Another consequence seems to us equally required of your justice, Monseigneur, the expenses of returning to their homeland should be the obligation of the Florida mission [i.e., the Diocese of St. Augustine]. That is, moreover, the opinion of our ecclesiastic Superior here.59

Mother Pélagie’s very respectful and measured response brought this brusque reply:

I wish to inform you that I do not acknowledge any obligation to furnish the Sisters who want to return to France either the costs of the journey or of apparel, and much less (to furnish) dowries or provisions for the those who have served the diocese for many years.

I am not dismissing them; they are all free to remain. Many of them had expressed the intention of remaining, but I am told lately that almost all have changed their mind as a result of encouragement which you wrote to them, and they want now to go away.60

Bishop Moore was clearly peeved by the Sisters’ desires to leave, something he apparently had not expected. In the same letter, he revealed the underlying reason for his desire to be rid of the French leadership. Besides Mother Lazarus’ alleged flagrant act of disobedience in regard to reading the papal decree, *Quemadmodum,* he asserted that the French Superiors, as far back as Mother Sidonie Rascle (the original founding Superior in St. Augustine), had not

59 Sister Pélagie Boyer, Superior General, Motherhouse in Le Puy, to Bishop Moore, St. Augustine, December 14, 1899, ASSJSA.

60 John Moore, D.D., Episcopal Residence, St. Augustine, to Reverend Mother, Le Puy, January 31, 1900, ASSJSA.
been unquestioningly obedient to him, and cited his experiences with them during the yellow fever epidemics of 1877 and 1888. He wrote:

In 1888, when yellow fever was epidemic in Jacksonville, the Mayor of the City and many doctors telegraphed me for Sisters to care for the sick in hospitals. In my simplicity, I thought I had only to notify Mother Lazarus to be obeyed immediately. What was my surprise when she refused, saying she ought to have the right to be consulted (to have something to say on the point). I returned home all disturbed and disappointed. I was about to telegraph to New Orleans for some Sisters when a little girl arrived from the convent to say that some Sisters would be sent to Jacksonville.

In 1877 [during the epidemic in Fernandina] Mother Sidonie had made the same refusal to venerable Father Dufau. As Mother Lazarus did, Mother Sidonie soon repented (had a second thought) and sent some Sisters to care for the sick.

How is this! I said to myself, in France the Sisters are evicted from hospitals [referring to a wave of anti-clericalism in France at the time] and in America when the authorities ask for them, the Superiors of the French Sisters refuse. I am sure it is only in the Diocese of St. Augustine that any Sisters even hesitated to give their assistance in times of an epidemic. . . .

I repeat, I want Sisters who obey me like their Bishop; and who are not in any manner subject to orders of a Superior in another distant country. 61

Bishop Moore’s displeasure with Mother Lazarus did, indeed, begin with her response during the 1888 yellow fever epidemic in Jacksonville. Shortly after the end of the epidemic, Sister M. Madeleine, a Sister at St. Joseph’s Academy in St. Augustine, wrote Mother Léocadie Broc in Le Puy:

My dear Mother, I don’t want to end without telling you a word about our dear Bishop so that you’ll pray to St. Joseph that he may change his ideas. Up to now he has been very good to us but lately he has changed. It seems that [way?] ever since our Mother [Lazarus] didn’t seem to wish to send Sisters to Jacksonville to take care of the sick during the epidemic. She did not refuse but she let him know it was hard for her to do. The same day, though, she sent three and a few days later, two more.

If this man turns against us, I don’t know how we will manage. . . . 62

Little did Sister Madeleine know how her words foreshadowed the coming events.

Moore’s desire to have Sisters directly and solely under his authority was not unusual for bishops. Bishop Gross, the prelate over the Diocese of Savannah, had brought an even more abrupt separation of the Sisters of St. Joseph from the Le Puy Motherhouse in 1874. Gross gave the Sisters in Savannah twenty-four hours to accept diocesan status, which would put them directly under his control, or leave the Diocese of Savannah. Rather than break with the Motherhouse, Sister Josephine Deleage, the Superior over the Savannah community, had returned to Florida and helped to establish the house in Palatka. Bishops’ desire to have complete authority over religious men and women certainly and understandably was not unusual.

What was unusual concerning the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine was that they did continue to maintain their ties to their Motherhouse in Le Puy. Their coming to Florida without going under the authority of the local bishop was arranged by Bishop Augustin Verot despite the Sisters of St. Joseph’s constitution (Holy Rule) which stipulated that all Sisters of St. Joseph communities would be diocesan, under the control of the local bishop. It is not clear why Verot made such an arrangement, especially since he would have been the one given authority over the Sisters. Perhaps this was a condition that persuaded the French Superiors to accept and support a mission in the United States.

From the very beginning, the arrangement seemed to work well. Pope Pius IX had sent the founding Sisters his personal blessing before they left Le Puy in 1866. In 1885, an obviously pleased Bishop Moore wrote Mother Lazarus of his audience with Pope Leo XIII, to whom Moore had reported on the fine work the Sisters were doing: “He was delighted to hear all the good things I had to tell him about my good Sisters and their work. . . . I gave the Holy Father a good account of you all, and he was so pleased that he took a big pinch of snuff on the head of it.

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62 Letter #10, Sr. M. Madeleine, St. Augustine, to Rev. Mother Léocadie [Broc], Le Puy, December 2, 1888, ASSJSA.

63 Sister Marie Julie [Roussel], St. Joseph Convent, Mandarin, Fla., to an unnamed Sister, March 28, 1886, ASSJSA.
and sent you a big blessing from the bottom of his heart.” Bishop Moore seemingly continued to support the unusual arrangement until the calamitous events in 1899.

Based on Moore’s previously brotherly/fatherly relationship with Mother Lazarus, it appears that the stroke he suffered removed all memory of his agreement with Mother Lazarus that allowed for alternate dates for reading the Pope’s decree, “provided that it is read once a year, that suffices.” The stroke may also explain Bishop Moore’s misapplication of the Pope’s decree. The provision for excommunication applied to Superiors who violated the sanctity of the Sacrament of Confession by forcing subordinates to reveal their matter of conscience, matters that were reserved for confessors. It did not apply to failure to read the decree on a particular day or in a prescribed fashion. What is most disturbing about these events is that no one, neither the priests nor the Superiors in France, came to the defense of Mother Lazarus or the other French Sisters when they were being abused by a bishop whose health was poor and whose judgment was clearly impaired. Furthermore, it appears that the Bishop’s staff promulgated a false representation of the changes at the convent. The *Florida Times-Union and Citizen* reported:

Mother Lazarus, who for twenty years had been in charge of St. Joseph’s Convent and Academy in this city, has resigned as Superioress [sic] on account of failing health, and will go to France. At an election recently held by the Sisters of St. Joseph, Sister Eulalia was elected to fill the important office of mother Superior [sic]. The resignation of Mother Lazarus was keenly felt by the Sisters, who had learned to love her dearly during her many years of active work.

This report is erroneous on several counts: 1) Mother Lazarus did not resign; she was deposed. 2) It was not because of Mother Lazarus’ declining health, but probably because of Bishop Moore’s impaired state of mind. 3) Although she eventually returned to France in May 1900, she was ordered to leave St. Augustine and go to Ybor City first. 4) Sister Eulalia was not elected, but was appointed by Bishop Moore. The only accurate statement is that Mother

64 John Moore, D.D., Bishop of St. Augustine, Rome to Mother Lazarus, St. Augustine, April 13, 1885, ASSJA.

65 Lazarus, 1908.

66 *Florida Times-Union and Citizen*, December 3, 1899.

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Lazarus was dearly loved by the Sisters and her departure was keenly felt. No mention is made of the break with the Motherhouse in France. It is unlikely that the newspaper knowingly misstated the facts; the details of the story were probably provided by the Bishop’s staff.

Bishop Moore died in St. Augustine on July 30, 1901, nearly two years after the break with France. He was succeeded by Father Kenny, who had been the parish priest in Jacksonville. Bishop Kenny was distraught over the prospects of losing more French Sisters, for the pain of the break with France was still palpable. He let Sister Louise Antonia, who was still the Mother over the house in Fernandina, know that “he would never have thought that what was done two years ago [the deposition of Mother Lazarus and the break with France] would have had such consequences.” And told her “I am far from approving what was done, but it cannot be undone.” Mother Antonia felt that if all could be done over, the break would not have been made, at least in the same manner.67

No further Sisters from Le Puy went to the Florida Mission. Instead, the communities in Florida would rely more and more on subjects from Ireland and Canada. As Jane Quinn points out, the growing power of Irish Catholicism was a trend throughout the Church in America. The French domination of the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine in the nineteenth century gave way to Irish hegemony in the first half of the twentieth century.68 The new arrangement eliminated the difficulties of dealing with Sisters who did not know English, and of trying to obtain Sisters from a Motherhouse in France that had its own responsibilities to meet and was faced with an anticlerical government that was making it harder and harder to function.69

Although the logic behind severing the bureaucratic ties with Le Puy is quite understandable, the way in which the break was accomplished was unnecessarily harsh and the

67 Mother Louise Antonia, Fernandina, to Rev. Mother, Le Puy, August 15, 1903, as quoted in McGoldrick, Beyond the Call, 360.

68 Quinn, Story of a Nun, 83.

69 Under the Third Republic, established in 1871 after France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, anticlerical forces came to power in 1877. A series of laws passed in the 1880s made primary education in France “free, obligatory, and secular.” Teaching Sisters were barred from the public schools in 1886. Even more aggressive laws against teaching orders, threatening their very existence, were passed between 1901 and 1904. Sarah A. Curtis, Educating the Faithful: Religion, Schooling, and Society in Nineteenth Century France (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 107, 146.
treatment Mother Lazarus received was incomprehensible. The following introductory words of the *Quemadmodem* decree are ironic in light of Bishop Moore’s actions: “Just as it is the fate of human things, how praiseworthy and holy soever [sic] they may be in themselves, even so is it of laws wisely enacted, to be liable to be misused and perverted to purposes opposed and foreign to their nature.”

How true these words are for Mother Lazarus who was deposed and excommunicated through her Bishop’s misuse of this decree, the very purpose of which was to protect subordinates from abuse.

The ministries of the Sisters of St. Joseph continued under Irish leadership, but the Florida Mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph from Le Puy came to an end. Eventually, the ties between Le Puy and St. Augustine were forgotten. Not until 1977, through the efforts of Sister Thomas Joseph McGoldrick, who was then the Superior General of the Sisters in St. Augustine, were the loving bonds with the Sisters in Le Puy renewed.

Among the continuing ministries were those of Sister Mary Ann. She carried on her efforts among the needy in Jacksonville long after the French Sisters departed. Much of her work had been accomplished trudging the unpaved streets of Jacksonville. In 1906, when she was 78 years old and beginning to slow down, the mayor of Jacksonville gave her a new horse and buggy to assist her in her work. No one wanted her to wear herself out, for her services were too valuable.

In her eightieth year, Sister Mary Ann celebrated her Golden Jubilee, fifty years of life as a professed Sister. The celebration on August 15, 1911, also commemorated the founding of the St. Mary’s Home, the only orphanage in the Diocese at that time. It was a grand event, with a pontifical Mass celebrated by Bishop Kenny, with numerous members of the clergy from around the state assisting. In addition to the public, Sisters from various convents throughout Florida were also in attendance. A reception at St. Mary’s Home filled the building with guests. The County gave Sister Mary Ann a purse of over $1600, with more to come, to express the

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72 McLaughlin, “Jacksonville’s Angel of Mercy,” [74].
community’s appreciation of her work. After the reception, the girls from St. Mary’s presented an entertainment that featured instrumental and choral music, dance, and recitations, a demonstration of the fruits of Sister Mary Ann’s labors. One of the girls recited, “To Sister Mary Ann,” a poem that summed up Sister Mary Ann’s life:

Fifty years since first you made
The vows which bind your heart to Him –
To One who died on bitter cross
To save all people from their sin.

Fifty-long, devoted years,
In service of the sick and poor!
And never one in all that time
That went unaided from your door.

O woman, of the loving heart,
And of the gentle helping hand!
Those fifty golden years of yours
Have been a blessing to our Land.

The poor and sinful, with your aid,
Have risen to a higher life;
The orphans, in St. Mary’s Home
Are shielded from the world’s hard strife.

The sick will ever bless your name
Because of your devoted love;
All sick and well and rich and poor –
Will blessings crave from God above.

May all your future days be fair
Until you lay life’s burden down;
And then the One you’ve served so well
Will change the cross for glorious crown.73

Not long after this grand celebration, Sister Mary Ann’s strength began to fade. From November through December of 1913, she was unable to leave her room. She received the last rites and gradually faded until she died on January 14, 1914, in her eighty-sixth year. Her body

73 Ibid., [78-81].
lay in the chapel at the Home for three days. The funeral held the next day was a sung Requiem Mass held at Church of the Immaculate Conception, a very large facility. It was “filled to its utmost capacity.” Once again, clergy and Sisters gathered from around the state, joining the mourning citizens of Jacksonville and Duval County. Also in attendance was a delegation from the United Daughters of the Confederacy, who came to acknowledge Sister Mary Ann’s work during the Civil War. Sister Mary Ann had been faithful to her vows as a Sister of St. Joseph, but had always remained a Sister of Mercy at heart. In accordance with her wishes, she was buried in St. Mary’s Cemetery dressed in the habit she had worn as a Sister of Mercy.

Sister Mary Ann had a truly charitable heart. At a time when caring for the poor was becoming a profession or the pet projects of women’s groups, Sister Mary Ann simply continued to do what she had always done – where there was suffering, she attempted to alleviate it, regardless of the color, creed, or supposed worthiness of the recipient. This is most clearly seen in her ministries to the condemned prisoners at the County Jail who were awaiting their executions. She treated all people with dignity, faithful to her motto, “When you do charity, do it [in] a charitable way.”

Through her truly good works, Sister MaryAnn won the hearts of the people of Jacksonville, both Protestant and Catholic. Gone were the strident exchanges between Protestant and Catholic missionaries of the 1870s, replaced with seemingly unbounded adulation for a “little Catholic nun” who cared for people with joy and abandon. It was perhaps because of Sister Mary Ann’s legacy in Jacksonville that the Sisters of St. Joseph there were not assailed

74 McLaughlin, “Jacksonville’s Angel of Mercy,” [84-85].

75 Edward F. Keuchel, Florida State University, to Sister Mary Denis Maher, C.S.A., Ursuline College, Pepper Pike, Ohio, January 29, 1990. Copy held by author. It is more likely that Sister Mary Ann’s Sisters of Mercy habit was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1901.

when the forces of anti-Catholicism that had begun to sweep across Florida struck the Sisters in St. Augustine two years later.
Figure 11. Sister Theresa Joseph, formerly St. Joseph’s Academy student Jeanie Gordon Brown. From McGoldrick, *Beyond the Call*. Used with permission.
Figure 12. May Mann with her class at St. Joseph’s Academy in St. Augustine, 1880. May is third from the left on the front row. From McGoldrick, *Beyond the Call*. Used with permission.
Figure 13. Mother Lazarus L’hostal. From McGoldrick, Beyond the Call. Used with permission.
Figure 14. Sister Mary Ann Hoare. Courtesy of the Archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine.
CHAPTER SIX
THE POLITICS OF ANTI-CATHOLICISM AND RACISM
IN EARLY 20TH CENTURY FLORIDA

When the first Sisters of St. Joseph from Le Puy, France, arrived in St. Augustine in September 1866 to teach the recently freed slaves, they had no idea that fifty years later their benevolent actions would be considered criminal and lead to the arrest of three Sisters. In 1866 the Sisters established a school for blacks, primarily to teach them the Catholic catechism, but also to instruct them in basic academic skills. The white citizens of St. Augustine were suspicious at first, but before a year had passed the Sisters were appreciated for their work among blacks and praised for their willingness to leave “la Belle France.”

St. Augustine had a significant Catholic population, but even the Protestants appreciated the Sisters’ work. The rancorous anti-Catholicism so well known in the more industrial Northeast was not then present in the South, where Catholics were relatively few in number.

By the 1910s, however, anti-Catholicism joined racism and anti-Semitism as a pall over the region. Anti-Catholicism had been present in America since the colonial period, when Catholics were persecuted and limited to a few colonies.

In the 1830s, convents were the targets

1 St. Augustine Examiner, August 17, 1867.

2 The social statistics from the 1860 Census showed that nearly 60% of the churches in St. Johns County were Roman Catholic. There were six Catholic churches in St. Johns County, with 2,000 members. The next most populated denomination was the Methodists, with 750. In 1870, the number of Catholics had declined to 1,200, but this still represented 60% of the recorded church members. The same census showed that the number of Presbyterians fell from 400 to 350, and the Methodists fell from 750 to 200, while the Episcopalians remained at 250. No Baptists were recorded in 1860 and 1870. Duval County, on the other hand, reported 400 Baptists, 500 Episcopalians, 800 Methodists, and no Roman Catholics in 1860. Report of the Social Statistics of Cities, compiled by George E. Waring, Jr. Part II: South and Western States. (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1887).


of raging mobs, and the subject of fabricated tales of bizarre, sordid activities. In 1839, the
American Bible Society made it a goal to have the Bible, specifically the Protestants’ King
James Version, read in every classroom. Most Americans considered the United States to be a
Protestant nation, and all other forms of religion, including Catholicism, were classified as sects.
As such, Catholic schools were ineligible for public funds.\(^5\) In the mid-nineteenth century, the
Know Nothings led the nativist charge as immigrants from Ireland and Germany, many of them
Catholic, flowed into the United States. Concerned with the influx of so many Catholics, in
1874, U.S. Senator James G. Blaine of Maine proposed an amendment to the U.S. Constitution
that said: “No money raised by taxation in any State for the support of public schools, or derived
from any public source, nor any public lands devoted thereto, shall ever be under the control of
any religious sect, nor shall any money so raised or land so devoted be divided between religious
sects or denominations.” The proposal was defeated in 1875, but lived on as the inspiration for
the adoption of “Blaine Amendments” in thirty-four state constitutions over the next thirty
years.\(^6\) Among them was the 1885 Florida State Constitution.

The United States experienced another wave of immigrants in the late nineteenth century,
this time from Southern Europe. Like the earlier Irish and German immigrants, most of the
newcomers went to urban areas in the Northeast and Midwest and were Catholic. They, too,
were met by the anti-Catholic sentiments of avowedly Protestant Americans. Catholic parochial
schools became a target of anti-Catholic rhetoric, especially after the American Catholic bishops,
at their Third Plenary Council, held in Baltimore in 1884, encouraged the establishment of
Catholic parish schools. The bishops’ action was in response to what they considered persecution
of Catholic students in the public schools, such as the forced use of the Protestant King James


Version of the Bible, and McGuffy readers that contained blatantly anti-Catholic language. The American Protective Association, founded by Henry Bowen in 1887, sought to oust Catholics from political power and to attack Catholic institutions, especially parochial schools. Anti-Catholics targeted the Catholic schools because they said the parochial institutions undermined the regular American public school system, which was “the foundation of the nation’s character and development” and source of national unity. They believed that if Catholics weakened the public school system they could more easily realize their alleged goal of taking over the country for the Pope. One of their major complaints was that tax dollars were being used to support parochial schools in spite of the Blaine amendments.

Unlike these earlier manifestations of anti-Catholicism in America, the anti-Catholic movement of the 1910s did not spring from the urban North, but from the rural South. Several historians have attributed the Progressive-Era war against Romanism to the disappointments of the failed Populist movement and the rapid social changes that were occurring at the time. Modernism, the result of such forces as industrialization, the advent of the automobile, the growing power of Big Business, Darwinism’s undermining of traditional Biblical beliefs, and changing social mores prompted a strong reaction. Such changes were seen by leaders in many smaller communities in rural areas as a threat to the balance of power and the small town “way of life.”

The ferocity with which anti-Catholicism swept through the South was largely due to the vitriolic writings of Tom Watson, the Populist politician from rural Thomson, Georgia, and Wilbur Franklin Phelps, a printer/newspaperman from Aurora, Missouri. Watson began


9 Ibid, 112; Kinzer, An Episode in Anti-Catholicism, 5.

publishing diatribes against the Catholic Church in a series of articles in his *Jeffersonian Magazine* from 1910-1917. He promulgated the old nineteenth century ideas of the supposed immoralities of Catholicism, but focused chiefly on the claim that Catholics, loyal to the Pope, had plans to turn the United States over to the Papacy. Furthermore, he claimed that Roman Catholics blindly followed the directions of the Pope and his priests, a thought seemingly substantiated by the Catholic Church’s 1870 adoption of the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope. Their “blind loyalty” to the Roman church, Watson claimed, made Catholics incapable of the independent thinking that was a necessary aspect of American democracy; Catholics, therefore, were dangerous to the United States. Phelps published *The Menace*, which was by far the most widely distributed of the anti-Catholic newspapers. He was particularly opposed to urbanism and believed his paper was needed to counter the city newspapers which he insisted spread “modernism and Catholic lies.” Although *The Menace* was more widely read than the *Jeffersonian Magazine*, Justin Nordstrom says, “Ultimately, Watson’s message of ‘backwoods’ traditionalism, Jeffersonian idealism, the dangers of urbanized and mechanized expansion and concern that ignorant Catholics and other groups threatened the contours of rural life stands as the hallmark of anti-Catholic nativism in the 1910’s.”

In his study of the anti-Catholic journals during the Progressive Era, Nordstrom aptly describes Watson’s, Phelps’ and other anti-Catholic writers’ approach: “Using the rhetoric of patriotic militarism, anti-catholic writers, editors and publishers lambasted their Romanist opponents as disloyal, backward-thinking, and intellectually stunted conspirators whose dedication to a corrupt priestly hierarchy rendered them unable to grasp or appreciate the tenets of American liberties, and, thus unworthy of national belonging or citizenship.” Concerning schools, Watson exclaimed: “‘Look how the Catholics refuse to send their children to our public schools, and yet have the audacity to ask the government to support their parochial schools,


12 Ibid., 88.

13 Ibid., 3.
which are simply training camps for Popish perversion of the coming generations.”

Catholic teachers in public schools were also viewed with great suspicion, for nativists feared the “duplicitous Catholic teachers” would indoctrinate their Protestant students. Nordstrom further says that “Catholicism emerged as the manifestation and, to a large degree, scapegoat for excesses of modernity,” and “This blending of familiar anti-Catholic diatribes with new accusations that speak directly to Progressive-Era concerns is what made anti-Catholic literature such a prevalent cultural force in the mid 1910’s.”

Several historians have described the very different nature of the anti-Catholicism that in the 1910s so suddenly and strongly spread across the rural South, where there were relatively few Catholics. John Higham points primarily to xenophobia that saw Catholic immigrants who were settling in urban centers as a threat to the country. He argues that by the early 1910s, nativism in cities had become more secular than religious, and the better educated urbanites no longer focused on Catholics but on Progressive-Era issues, such as health, urban planning, fighting corrupt government, etc. He says, “What had issued from Boston, New York, and Philadelphia in the 1840s radiated from the smaller cities of the Middle West in the 1880s and finally found its most valiant champions among the hicks and hillbillies.”

Justin Nordstrom, however, argues that far from being the province of backward “hicks and hillbillies,” referring to the inhabitants of the rural South, the anti-Catholicism of the 1910s was part of mainstream American culture. His study of anti-Catholic journals from the period shows that in 1915, Watson’s Magazine had a circulation of 80,000, while copies of The Menace reached 1,469,400 subscribers. These statistics show that more than two million Americans bought anti-Catholic newspapers each week. The circulation statistics of the anti-Catholic periodicals rivaled those of such mainstream media as the Saturday Evening Post (1,950,565),

17 Ibid.
Watson’s and Phelps’ influential publications were particularly popular in the rural parts of the South, including Florida, and their writings helped shape the politics of the state in the mid-1910s. From 1913 to 1917, the Florida legislature considered and sometimes passed a number of anti-Catholic bills, and fear of Papists was a major factor in the gubernatorial and senatorial elections of 1916. Several historians, some of whose work is now thirty to sixty years old, have written about this brief season of anti-Catholicism in Florida. Two issues have received attention most often, the employment of Catholic Sisters in some of Florida’s public school systems, and the more well known controversy over the instruction of African Americans by Sisters of St. Joseph in their segregated parochial schools. The oft quoted sources for accounts of these events are master’s theses written by Sisters of St. Joseph. They perhaps relied too heavily upon oral histories provided by their fellow Sisters, which gave a narrow view and limited understanding of the surrounding events that led to the Sisters’ withdrawal from the public school system and later arrest. For whatever reasons, additional research now sheds new light on those events.

The 1913, 1915, and 1917 legislative sessions saw a rash of anti-Catholic bills. The 1913 legislative session especially impacted the Sisters of St. Joseph and other Catholic religious orders teaching in Florida. One of the pieces of proposed legislation, House Bill No. 577, was


20 The obviously anti-Catholic bills included measures to: authorize the inspection of convents, parochial schools and other private institutions (“Convent Inspection Bill”); prohibit the carrying or drinking of intoxicating liquors at churches (including sacramental wine) and other public gatherings; bar teachers from wearing religious clothing or insignia while teaching in public schools (“Anti-Garb Bill”); authorize the taxation of church property; allow Bible reading (King James Version) and prayer in public schools; and authorize the compulsory attendance of children in public schools. All but the inspection bill were defeated. The “Convent Inspection Bill” was never enforced and was repealed in 1935. See Rackleff, “Anti-Catholicism and the Florida Legislature,” 356-364; Page, “Bishop Michael J. Curley,” 115-116; Dennis Michael McCarron, “Catholic Schools in Florida, 1866-1992” (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1993), 88-96.
“An Act Prohibiting the Wearing of the Garb or Insignia of Religious Societies by Public School Teachers While Performing Their Duties as Such,” that had been introduced by Gadsden County’s Representative Samuel H. Strom. According to the Tampa Morning Tribune, a Catholic-friendly newspaper, Strom introduced the bill at the request of some St. Johns County citizens, and was a “direct attack on the Catholic Sisters who are engaged in school work.”

Edwin Spencer, a Representative from Marion County and the Speaker pro tempore, also spoke against the bill, saying,

it is the most vicious piece of legislation that could be enacted into law, because it is a strike at the religious liberty of the Roman Catholic Church. Secondly, it is an attempt to bring a local fight into the Legislature, and have this House settle a matter that the people of the counties affected have not the courage to settle among themselves. Furthermore, under this bill a school teacher is debarred from wearing an Epworth League pin or a B.Y.P.U. pin. It will make a criminal practically of every school teacher in the state.21

Representative Otis R. Parker from St. Lucie County denounced it as “the worst of all the freak bills that had been ‘thrust upon’ the present Legislature.” Representative Glenn Terrell of Sumter County, however, spoke in favor of the bill, saying it would be in support of the “fundamental principle in the constitution, . . . the separation, complete divorcement, of the church and state, and that the bill sought this simply and nothing more.” Terrell, who would later serve on the Florida Supreme Court from 1923 to 1964, three times as the Chief Justice, carried the day. The bill passed the House by a vote of 49 to 11 and was sent to the Senate.22 On June 6, 1913, the Tallahassee Semi-Weekly True Democrat, reported that the House had passed the measure and that the true intent of the bill was “for the relief of” Duval, St. Johns, and Pasco counties, where public school funds were being used to support denominational schools. The paper explained, “The effect of this bill is to keep the public school neutral ground religiously, and to prevent the appropriation of public school funds for denominational purposes.”


the bill passed in the House, it failed in the Senate. Sister Mary Alberta, in her 1940 thesis on schools operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph, cites the 1913 Anti-Garb bill as a factor in the Sisters of St. Joseph’s decision to relinquish their positions as public schools teachers, posts they had held since 1878 when Bishop John Moore was able to realize Bishop Augustin Verot’s dream of having the Sisters’ schools in St. Johns County and elsewhere in Florida included in the public school systems. She wrote that the Sisters would have laid aside their habits but because Catholic patrons could support them and good schools were then available to non-Catholics, “the Sisters quietly surrendered their public schools.”

The *St. Augustine Evening Record*, however, provides a fuller account of how the change transpired. On July 14, 1913, several citizens of St. Augustine complained to Governor Park Trammell that St. Johns County was in violation of Article XII, Section 13 of the state constitution of 1885. This “Blaine amendment” provided: “No law shall be enacted authorizing the diversion or the lending of any County or District School Funds, or the appropriation of any part of the permanent or available school fund to any other than school purposes; nor shall the same, or any part thereof, be appropriated or used for the support of any sectarian school.” The letter was signed by S.J. Baker, pastor of the Baptist church, and co-signed by: E.E. Boyce, ex-mayor; L. Orin Larson, real estate agent; C.M. Fuller, vice-president of Greenleaf & Crosby Co.; C.D. Vanaman, master mechanic, Florida East Coast Railway Company; A.R. Dale, president of the Law and Order League; E.H. Reynolds, ex-school superintendent; Alfred S. Badger, pastor of Flagler Memorial Presbyterian Church; L. Fitz-James Hindry, rector of Trinity Episcopal Church; the Rev. W.G. Fletcher, pastor of the First Methodist Episcopal Church, South; and

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23 “Religious Robes in Public Schools of This State,” *Semi-Weekly True Democrat*, June 6, 1913.

J.H. Martin, pastor of Grace Methodist Episcopal Church.25

The intent of the above parties was to demonstrate that the free schools taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph in St. Johns County, Public School No. 12 in St. Augustine and Public School No. 13 in Moccasin Branch, were in fact sectarian schools, and that Governor Trammell, as president of the State Board of Education, should put a stop to the misappropriation of public school funds used for the support of those schools. They supported their case by pointing out that 1) checks to the teachers were made out, not to individuals who happened to be members of the Sisters of St. Joseph, but to the “Sisters of St. Joseph,” a Roman Catholic organization, 2) a list of county teachers gave the name of the teachers at schools 12 and 13 as “sister this or that,” and pointed out that School No. 12 was a building on the grounds of St. Joseph’s Convent, and therefore was owned by the Roman Catholic Church, 3) only Sisters of St. Joseph taught at Schools 12 and 13, 4) Roman Catholic catechism was taught, admittedly not during school hours, but in the building used for public school purposes and taught by teachers who were paid out of public schools funds. They also noted that public funds were being used for sectarian purposes in Duval and Pasco counties; 5) the children at these public schools were taught to observe Roman Catholic saints’ days and given those days off from school “contrary to law,” 6) twice a week the children were taken to their school auditorium to sing Roman Catholic hymns, 7) while teaching, the Roman Catholic Sisters wore the religious garb and insignia of their orders (although the Anti-Garb Bill of 1913 failed, the Sisters’ use of their habits bolstered the arguments that their schools were sectarian), 8) the fact that the Catholic bishop, William J. Kenny “approved” Public Schools 12 and 13 “branded” them as sectarian institutions, and 9) the complainants pointed out that the county’s Public School No. 1 in St. Augustine was large enough to accommodate the students at Public School No. 12, and the school on the convent grounds (No. 12) was therefore unnecessary. In closing, they said “We confidently appeal to you for your help. Our lovely state is yet American rather than sectarian. We appeal to you to help

25 “School Question Before Governor,” *St. Augustine Evening Record*, August 22, 1913, p. 2. The *St. Augustine Evening Record* is hereafter cited as SAER.
us to preserve it such.” Their final pleas may have been alluding to the anti-Catholic charge that the Pope’s aim was to take over control of the United States through the schools.

On July 25, the governor wrote L.A. Colee, Chairman of the St. Johns County School Board, sending him a copy of the complaint and asking him to “kindly advise me in the premises.” On July 29, the board replied, after conferring with Sister Mary Louise, the Mother Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and Sister Agnita, the principal of School No. 12. There were no disputes with the complainants’ assertions except on a few points. They clarified that School No. 12, located on the convent grounds, was owned by the Sisters of St. Joseph, not by the Roman Catholic Church. They confirmed that the catechism was taught, but the religious instruction was given outside of regular school hours and the students were not forced to learn it. The catechism was not taught in School No. 13 at all, but in a separate building distinct from the school. At No. 12, on Holy Days of Obligation, only two or three days per year, students were dismissed from their studies, but the time was made up by opening the school year one week earlier than the other public schools. On Friday mornings, the children at No. 12 went to the convent auditorium where with “ample musical instruments, they were taught not only Roman Catholic Hymns, but also patriotic hymns and airs.” Sisters did, indeed, wear their habits and a cross or crucifix. Concerning the suggestion to combine the students of School No. 12 with those at the commodious School No. 1, the board pointed out that because there were so many children in the lower grades at No. 12, it would be too crowded for the youngest students at School No. 1 if the classes were combined.

The Board further explained that the Sisters of St. Joseph had been teaching in the public schools of St. Johns County for over forty years, and referred to Bishop Moore’s 1878 agreement with the county. Furthermore, they said that the first public school teachers’ institute ever held in the state to train teachers was held on the Sisters’ convent grounds under the then state


27 “School Question Before Governor,” SAER, August 22, 1913, pp. 1-3.

28 Ibid.
Superintendent of Public Instruction, A.J. Russell. The Board had never intended to make Public Schools 12 and 13 sectarian, and the sixteen or eighteen Protestant students out of the 109 who attended the schools were never forced to practice Catholic rites. Never before had there been a complaint about the Board’s employment of the Sisters of St. Joseph, nor had there ever been an assertion that the Board was using public school funds illegally.

On August 8, Governor Trammell asked the Board for further information: Did the Sisters who taught in Public Schools 12 and 13 hold teaching certificates? Why were only Catholics used to teach at those schools? Were there other schools where the teachers belonged to only one denomination? What were the purpose and the object of the corporation known as the “Sisters of St. Joseph”? Did the Board maintain any other schools in St. Augustine that were “separate and apart” from the high school?

Colee responded on August 14. He provided a list of the teaching Sisters by name, giving the number of each one’s certificate and the date it was issued. As to why only Catholics were employed at the schools, he referred to the 1878 correspondence between Bishop Moore and Thomas T. Russell, who was then the Superintendent of Schools for St. Johns County. In his letter to the Board, Moore pointed out that the Catholics of St. Augustine had educated their own children, both black and white, amounting to about 330 students, each year. They had done this

29 St. Johns County held a teachers’ institute in St. Augustine on September 1, 1890. It was not, however, the first institute held in the state. In an effort to obtain a higher caliber teaching force, State Superintendent of Public Instruction William P. Haisley organized the first teachers’ institute in 1879, and established institutes to provide instruction for teachers in “Duval, Hernando, Marion, Nassau, Orange, Santa Rosa, Suwannee, Washington and other counties.” The legislature provided $1000 to support the institutes in 1883, but funding was not consistent. Succeeding Superintendents Foster and Russell promoted the institutes also, and personally organized some of them. The legislature did not fund state institutes in 1890, but many counties held their own, for two months in Alachua and Polk counties, and for one month in Hillsborough, Marion, Putnam, Washington, Levy, Jefferson, and St. Johns counties. W.N. Sheats, Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, (1895), 40; Thomas Everette Cochran, Public School Education in Florida (Lancaster, PA: New Era Printing, [1921]), 75-76; George Gary Bush, History of Education in Florida (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1889), 27. St. Johns’ was attended by teachers from St. Johns County as well as some from neighboring counties. Among the attendees were Sisters of St. Joseph: Sisters Clotilde, Jones, and Ambrose from Moccasin Branch; Sisters Theresa Hernandez, Gertrude Capo, Lucy Dellon, and Ignatius Morrell from St. Augustine; and Sisters Sidonia McCarthy and Aloysia Andrew of New Augustine. “The Teachers’ Institute. A Big Gathering of the ‘Schoolmarms’ of St. Johns County,” Florida Times-Union, September 2, 1890, p. 2. The official Record of the Sisters of St. Joseph for September 1, 1890 confirms the location, noting “first Teacher Institute held at Public School Building. 7 Srs. attended all passed exams.”

30 “School Question Before Governor,” SAER August 22, 1913, p. 2.
without any financial support from the state or county, “there being, it is believed, a want of harmony between the religious principles upon which Catholic schools are conducted and the State law on education, as that law now stands on the statue [sic] book.” Because Catholics paid most of the taxes in the county, he proposed a plan that would give them the “benefit of the school fund without violating either the spirit or the letter of the State law on education.” Moore then put forth a seven-part plan: 1) Catholic schools would be under the School Board as public schools and subject to the Board’s disciplinary rules, 2) the Sisters of St. Joseph would take teacher examinations and be certified just as other public school teachers were, 3) the Catholic schools would be subject to inspection, just as other public schools were, 4) the Catholic schools would use the same textbooks as those used in the public schools, 5) the Sisters would be paid salaries, based on their level of certification, just as public teachers were paid, 6) religious instruction would take place outside regular school hours, and 7) the school rooms and furniture used in the Catholic schools were offered to the Board for its use. On August 27, 1878, the School Board unanimously agreed to adopt the Bishop’s proposal with the hope “that the schools will be conducted in a spirit of harmony and brotherly love.” Governor Trammell turned all of the information over to Attorney General Thomas F. West and asked for his advice on the matter.31

As the citizens of St. Augustine awaited the Attorney General’s opinion, preparation for the new school year continued. The Sisters of St. Joseph planned to open their free schools for the poor on Monday, September 15, and their tuition-funded St. Joseph’s Academy the next Monday. In the meantime, a meeting was held at the academy auditorium on the Sunday afternoon before the school opening to talk about the formation of a Catholic School Association. With great optimism the paper claimed, “While the schools taught by the Sisters have always held an enviable reputation as institutions of learning the future holds a promise of greater achievement than ever in the past and the co-operation of the entire Catholic community

is requested and expected.”

On September 23, the Catholics met again to discuss the future of their parochial schools. Father O’Brien, the rector of the cathedral, emphasized the need to provide training for their youth. He said that, while secular education was “essential and necessary,” a thought contrary to the widespread anti-Catholic belief that the Roman church saw secular schools as evil, it was the responsibility of the Catholics to provide religious instruction for their children, and that was possible only in their own parochial schools.

The Association was then formed, with O’Brien elected the president and the treasurer, and Clarence R. Rogero, a layman, the secretary. The assembly also elected a twenty-member executive committee to serve as an educational board. There was an outpouring of financial support, with members enthusiastically making annual pledges for the schools. They even went so far as to propose to replace the old building “formerly used as a public school,” with a modern structure.

Such enthusiasm and support for a separate parochial school system came forth before the state’s final decision had been made public. That came two days later when the Evening Record published in full the Attorney General’s response. In a September 9, 1913, letter to L.A. Colee, the Chairman of the county school board, West requested that the county no longer use any county school funds to support school Nos. 12 and 13. Continuing in this very respectful tone, West explained that the practice of paying the Sisters of St. Joseph as public school teachers was, indeed, a violation of Article XII, Section 13 of the state constitution, and added

32 “Sisters’ Schools to Open Next Monday in This City,” SAER, September 8, 1913, p. 1.

33 “Public Schools Will Open for Term Monday Morning,” SAER, September 11, 1913, p. 1; “Public Schools Will Open for New Year Next Monday” and “Catholic Schools Open Monday – Meeting Tomorrow,” SAER, September 13, 1913, p. 1; “With Splendid Attendance Parochial Schools are Open,” SAER, September 15, 1913; “With a Record Attendance St. Joseph’s Academy Opens,” SAER September 22, 1913.


that Sections 5 and 6 of its declaration of rights must also be considered. Section 5 stated: “The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship shall forever be allowed in this State, etc., and Section 6 stated: “No preference shall be given by law to any church, sect or mode of worship, and no money shall ever be taken from the public treasury directly or indirectly in aid of any church, sect or religious denominations, or in aid of any sectarian institution.” West then stated that the provisions of the constitution were “self-executing,” i.e., not requiring acts of the legislature to be in force, and limiting the powers and actions of all public officials. He declared that “The appropriation or use of any portion of the school funds of St. Johns county [sic] to support a school conducted in this way, in my opinion, violates the constitutional inhibition referred to, and is therefore unauthorized.”

Thus ended the thirty-five year arrangement whereby the Sisters of St. Joseph taught in the public school system. It was not a quiet decision by the Sisters simply to withdraw from the public schools. It was the result of great public discussion and a constitutional interpretation of the practice by the state’s attorney general. Both the Catholic community and the public school adherents seemed to embrace the separation with great anticipation of brighter futures for both systems.

Meanwhile, the Catholic Church began to look at another one of the bills that were signed into law after the 1913 legislative session. Although it was not obviously anti-Catholic, it had a profound effect on the Catholic schools for blacks run by the Sisters of St. Joseph. On April 23, 1913, Representative E.D. Prevatt of Clay County introduced House Bill 415, “An Act Prohibiting White Persons From Teaching Negroes in Negro Schools, and Prohibiting Negro Teachers From Teaching White Children In White Schools in the State of Florida, and Providing for the Penalty Therefor [sic].” The act provided that violators could be fined up to five hundred

36 “Final Decision in School Matter,” SAER, September 25, 1913, p. 3.

37 The arrangement Verot achieved in Savannah in 1870, and hoped to emulate in St. Augustine, was ended in December 1916 after a lawyer fought against it on the grounds that the Georgia constitution prohibited the use of public funds for sectarian uses. Gannon, Rebel Bishop, 190-191. Although the Sisters of St. Joseph withdrew from the public schools, the Sisters of St. Benedict in San Antonio, Pasco County, and the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary in Key West and Tampa continued to teach in public schools for several more years. Ibid., 116; McCarron, “Catholic Schools in Florida,” 91.
dollars or imprisoned in the County jail up to six months.\textsuperscript{38} It was read for the first time by its title and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary A. The next day, the Committee reviewed the bill, recommended its passage and placed it on the Calendar of Bills for its second reading. It was taken up again on May 17, and though some amendments to exempt reform schools were considered, the bill passed on unchanged to its third reading where it received a unanimous vote in support of passage. The measure was engrossed that same day and sent over to the Senate for consideration. On June 3, Senator John P. Wall of Putnam Hall, in Putnam County, just south of the Clay County line, moved that the rule requiring the readings of a bill to occur on separate days be waived and that House Bill 415 be taken up and considered. His motion was approved and the bill immediately moved on through its second and third readings and was approved unanimously. On June 4 the bill was referred to the Committee on Enrolled Bills. The next day, the committee found it to be correctly enrolled, and it was referred to the Joint Committee on Enrolled Bills, which also found it to be correctly enrolled. On June 6 it was again found to be correctly enrolled and sent to the Governor who signed it into law on June 7, 1913.\textsuperscript{39} Thus, the bill was quickly shepherded through the legislative process and passed without eliciting any great debate or any notice by the Senators who had quashed several of the anti-Catholic bills. Unlike the Anti-Garb Bill, there was no discussion of this bill in the newspapers, only its inclusion in the lists of bills the legislators had considered on a given day, and its passage and signing into law by the Governor. Perhaps it was seen primarily as a restriction on blacks and was, therefore, not controversial.

By the fall of 1913, however, with the school year about to commence, William J. Kenny, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of St. Augustine, asked the diocese’s attorney to examine the law and its potential impact on the black schools run by the Sisters of St. Joseph. Actually, the law could affect every Catholic School for African Americans in Florida at that time. In the Diocese of Mobile, which included all of Florida west of the Apalachicola River, Catholic Sisters taught


\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Florida House Journal}, 1913, pp. 670, 823, 1540, 2509, 2559, 2561, and 2636; \textit{Florida Senate Journal}, 1913, pp. 2279-2280.
blacks in Pensacola, at St. Joseph’s School, which had four teachers and 190 students; and in Warrington, at St. John the Evangelist School, which had one teacher and thirty-four students. In the Diocese of St. Augustine, two Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary taught 125 students at St. Peter Claver School in Tampa, and two of the same order taught ninety-five students at St. Francis Xavier School in Key West. The Sisters of St. Joseph had charge of St. Benedict the Moor School in Ybor City, where three Sisters taught 125 students; Peter Claver School in Fernandina, where two Sisters taught twenty-nine students, and St. Benedict the Moor School in St. Augustine, where three Sisters taught sixty-five students.40

On September 3, 1913, Alston (A.W.) Cockrell of Cockrell & Cockrell in Jacksonville wrote Kenny that he thought the law was unconstitutional because it did not apply equally to all races. Looking at Section 1 of the printed as well as the original enrolled act on file with the Florida Secretary of State, he noted that the wording differed from the title of the actual law. Section 1 read: “From and after the passage of this Act it shall be unlawful in this State, for white teachers to teach negroes in negro schools, and for negro teachers to teach in white schools.” It left out the phrase specifying that “negro” teachers could not teach white children and inadvertently simply said they could not teach in white schools at all.41 Cockrell felt that the law was flawed because it applied only to whites and blacks, and not to any other races. He wrote “. . . there is a distinction made between white teachers and negro teachers. The white teachers are only inhibited from teaching negro children in negro schools, being not prohibited from teaching any one [sic] other than negroes in the negro schools, whereas negro teachers are prohibited from teaching at all in white schools.” He gave the example that white teachers could,


41 Alston (A.W.) Cockrell of Cockrell & Cockrell, Jacksonville to Rt. Rev. W. J. Kenny, St. Augustine, September 3, 1913. Diocese of St. Augustine Records, Reel 3, Box 3-W-22. Microfilm on file at P.K. Yonge Library, University of Florida, Gainesville. The mistake in the enrolled version may have come about because of the rush to get the bill passed and signed into law before the end of the legislative session. For whatever reason, it was on the basis of its unequal application to white and black teachers that Cockrell deemed the law unconstitutional and advised Bishop Kenny to ignore it. Cockrell did not raise any question of whether or not the law applied to private as well as public schools.
then, teach Seminoles in black schools but black teachers would not be able to teach in a white
school no matter the race of the student. He continued, “At first blush, the distinction may seem
to be a distinction without difference but I think that this is not so. . . . This discrimination, in
my opinion, makes the act void.” In advising the bishop, he said,

Just what steps should be taken with reference to it [the law] I am uncertain.
Theoretically, since the act is void, the proper course would be to pay no attention
to it than if it never had been written. Practically, however, this might result in
the Sisters being subjected to embarrassment by prosecutions or threatened
prosecutions or possibly by imprisonment. Then too, while I have no doubt in my
own mind that the act is void, the courts might take another view of it and might
hold it constitutional. So it may be that the best course would be to interview the
prosecuting officer in each county where the Sisters teach negro children,
explaining to him wherein the act is violative [sic] of the constitution and secure
some arrangement not to prosecute; or if this be impossible, to secure some
arrangement by which a test case can be made with the agreement that no action
be taken, except in the test case, until after the test case is concluded.42

Some of Cockrell’s reasoning in the letter is obscure, but it appears that Bishop Kenny took his
attorney’s advice to pay no attention to the law.

The next month Bishop Kenny, who had just turned sixty, died. He had been in failing
health, but his death from pneumonia on October 23, 1913, while on a trip to Baltimore, was
quite unexpected.43 It is not known if Kenny had any intention to force the issue about the
Sisters’ black schools, but Cockrell’s counsel to ignore the law seems to have been wise, for the
Sisters continued to open their black schools in the fall as usual with no outcry from any corner.

Bishop Kenny was succeeded by Michael J. Curley, the mission priest in DeLand,
Florida, though he had been stationed in St. Augustine briefly nine years before. He was
appointed by the Pope on April 2, 1914, at the age of 34. Curley’s return to St. Augustine as the
new bishop was highly anticipated as he had “won the highest esteem and the warm regard of the
people of [St. Augustine] regardless of denomination.” He was further described in the St.
Augustine paper as “a scholar of rare attainment, a preacher of exceptional ability and a man of

42 Ibid.

43 “Death Claims Bishop Wm. J. Kenny,” St. Augustine Evening Record, October 23, 1913, pp. 1, 4, 5.
very pleasing personality. He is a young, energetic and zealous worker and as a bishop will be a force that will exert a great influence for the good of the entire State.”

The address Curley gave at a reception held for him by St. Augustine’s Knights of Columbus and the Daughters of Isabella on July 3, 1914, showed that Curley was not one to shy away from confrontation. Citing St. Augustine’s five hundred year history as a Catholic city, he said, “Here then no apologies are needed for our existence, and I owe no man any explanation of my return to this dear old city as Catholic bishop of this diocese. . . . we are of the present, with our vision focused cheerfully and courageously on the years to be . . . .”

Florida’s legislature met biannually in the early 1900s, and 1914 was an off year. During that time there was little anti-Catholic activity. In 1915, the legislature did meet, and the Tallahassee Democrat proudly reported in its May 6, 1915, issue that Representative William Henry “Bill” Mapoles from Walton County had been noticed by The Menace, identified by the Democrat’s editors as “the great Anti-Catholic paper,” for his introduction of a bill providing for a state investigation of Catholic convents. The Menace’s article actually decried The Tampa Tribune’s denunciation of Mapoles’ bill, and its praise of the work carried on in the convents. In regard to the Representative, the Tampa paper said, “Mapoles has probably been reading The Menace [sic], a publication which makes war on the Catholic church [sic], without much regard to whether it deals in facts or falsehoods in such warfare. The State of Florida ought to pray for early deliverance from this brand of intolerance and from legislation of the Maypole [sic] type.” The Tallahassee Democrat, however, accused the Tribune’s editors of “hunger[ing] for the bum blessings of Rome more than they thirst for righteousness of human freedom.” This exchange shows the clear divide between the urban community of Tampa and the rural community of Tallahassee.

44 “Father Curley Made Bishop, Appointed by Pope on April 2,” St. Augustine Evening Record, April 2, 1914, p. 1.

45 “Public Reception Tendered Bishop Michael J. Curley,” Jacksonville Florida Times-Union, July 3,1914, pp. 3, 8. Curley’s assertion, “For five centuries the line of noble Catholic traditions has been stretched out with never a break, connecting the pioneer days of DeLeon and Menendez with our own,” was perhaps an orator’s exaggeration. DeLeon had arrived 301 years before, and Menendez 349 years before.

The main focus during the legislative session, however, was the upcoming elections in 1916. Of particular note was the entry of Sidney J. Catts into Florida’s political arena. Catts, a Baptist preacher originally from Alabama, briefly served a church in DeFuniak Springs in Florida’s rural panhandle before deciding to run for governor in 1916. He was considered a joke by the long established Democrats in Tallahassee, but they underestimated the strong appeal his anti-Catholic rhetoric would have in the rural areas of the state. Catts appealed to the prevailing patriotism and anti-Catholicism that was sweeping the South. His supporters put forth his platform that clearly demonstrated his strategy to take advantage of anti-Catholic sentiments:

Nothing in Florida above the Nation’s flag. As Roman Catholicism puts her allegiance to the Pope above the flag, Mr. Catts stands against her invasion of the State of Florida in her politics. As Roman Catholicism opposes our public school system, Mr. Catts opposes Roman Catholicism in the State of Florida in the realm of education. As Roman Catholicism believes in the celibacy of the priesthood and the confessional, Mr. Catts stands squarely against them, and is ready to fight from the State of Florida this great menace to the peace of home, the maintenance of our public schools, and the enjoyment of quiet religion at all hazards.47

His strategy worked. Fueled by the diatribes of Tom Watson, Wilbur Phelps, and the other anti-Catholic writers of the day, Catts was a powerful opponent to the well known Democratic veteran, W.V. Knott. Governor Park Trammell was nearing the end of his single term, all that was allowed under Florida law at that time, and cast his eye about for which political seat he would next seek. He settled upon a run for the United States Senate, opposing the incumbent, Nathan Bryan.

The newspapers of 1916 were filled with news of the various political campaigns. In mid April, however, papers across the state, out of state, and even in Europe48 reported the arrest of three Sisters of St. Joseph on Monday, April 24, the day after Easter, and in the midst of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Sisters of St. Joseph’s arrival in Florida, when they came to teach the newly freed slaves. Sister Mary Thomasine Hehir was the principal of St.


Benedict the Moor School, the black parochial school located in Lincolville, the historic black area of St. Augustine.\textsuperscript{49} She, along with two other Sisters who taught there, was ordered to appear before the county judge, accused of violating the 1913 law that made it illegal for white teachers to instruct blacks in black schools. Based on interviews with Sisters of St. Joseph who were there, Jane Quinn wrote,

\begin{quote}
Between nine and ten o’clock on Easter Monday morning the prisoner, Thomasine, was led to court. She went out the back gate of Hospital [Aviles] Street toward the courthouse, accompanied by the priest and the superior general, while the other Sisters watched apprehensively from the second floor porch [of the convent]. Old-timers in the convent thought the reason they chose the back street was “to avoid a tumult on St. George Street,” although local sentiment was not really at such a fever pitch.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

The two teachers accepted the offer of bonding out and were released under their own recognizance, but Sister Thomasine refused the offer.\textsuperscript{51} The judge allowed her to be held at the convent in the custody of Father O’Brien, rather than being sent to the county jail. The papers reported that the St. Johns County sheriff had been instructed by Governor Trammell to make the arrest after he received a petition advising him that the law was being violated. The petition came from an unnamed black man identified only as possibly being an employee of the Surprise Store, a St. Augustine department store. Some papers reported the complaint had been made by three black men employed at the Surprise Store.\textsuperscript{52} From the start the arrest was seen as a

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\textsuperscript{50} Quinn, \textit{Story of a Nun}, 206.

\textsuperscript{51} In his 1993 dissertation, Dennis McCarron states that according to Sr. Mary Albert Lussier, then archivist for the Sisters of St. Joseph, it was widely believed that Bishop Curley advised Sister Thomasine to refuse to pay the bond in order to call greater attention to the case. McCarron, “Catholic Schools in Florida,” (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1993), 100.

\textsuperscript{52} St. Augustine city directories for 1914 and 1915 show that the Surprise Store employed three black porters.

\end{quote}
preliminary step in testing the law, and it was expected that the case would go to the state or even the United States Supreme Court.53

Because the case involved a state law, the trial was held in Circuit Court before Judge George Cooper Gibbs. The first hearing was held May 4. Sister Mary Thomasine, represented in court by Alston Cockrell, the attorney who advised Bishop Kenny, pleaded not guilty. While the case was still pending, teaching at the Catholic black schools across the state was suspended. As the outcome would also affect Baptist black schools, there was much interest even among non-Catholics. The newspapers in St. Augustine and Tampa, where Catholic Sisters taught blacks, were sympathetic and outraged by the arrests. A report from St. Augustine said,

The incident has naturally created a great deal of talk here, much indignation has been expressed, and it seems deplorable that any law should be countenanced which has for its object the prevention of gratuitous education of the colored boys and girls of the state by white teachers. It seems a pity that the Sisters of St. Joseph should not only be hampered in their free educational work, but also be embarrassed by arrest for their noble efforts in behalf of the uneducated children.

The result of this case will be awaited with keen interest by the people of this city and county especially. In fact, it is of statewide interest, so long as it will test the constitutionality of a legislative act which precludes the proper education of the negroes of Florida.54

In other parts of the state, where there was no real Catholic presence, however, there was support for the arrest. The Lake City Index, for example, praised Governor Trammell and the sheriff for doing their duty to enforce the law, and said it was “glad that negroes brought this case.”55

On May 21, Judge Gibbs ordered Sister Thomasine to be released for he found that she had not violated the 1913 act.56 He explained that the state clearly had the authority to rule that whites could not teach blacks in public black schools and that blacks could not teach whites in


54 “Recent State Law to Be Tested in St. Augustine,” Florida Times-Union, April 25, 1916, p. 4.

55 “Trammell Is Right On This,” Lake City Index, quoted in the Tallahassee Daily Democrat, May 18, 1916, p. 4.

public schools, but it had no authority to apply the law to private schools. He further ruled that the law was unconstitutional because it violated the Florida state constitution, specifically Section 1, which states that all men are equal before the law and have the inalienable right of possessing and protecting property and pursuing happiness, and Section 12, which says private property cannot be taken without just compensation. He ruled the law also violated Article XIV of the United States constitution which says no state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunization of citizens of the United States. Life, liberty and property cannot be taken without due process. He ruled that the 1913 law violated these constitutional principles because it deprived teachers of privileges which were not denied to any other class of citizens. He wrote,

Has a white teacher any the less right to sell his services to negro pupils than a white doctor to negro patients, or a white lawyer to negro clients, or a white merchant has a right to sell his goods to negro customers, and vice versa? Such a classification is not based on any natural reason. . . . Such a law “amounts to class legislation depriving teachers of privileges which are not denied to any other class of citizens and it violates a liberty guaranteed by the Constitution to-wit, the right of a citizen to be free in the enjoyment of all his faculties and be free in the use of them in all lawful ways when they do not infringe upon the equal rights of others.57

On the surface the 1916 arrest of the three Sisters of St. Joseph appears to be just another example of the anti-Catholic spirit of the times. Author Jane Quinn believed that to be so, for she wrote:

It is difficult to explain why the petition to arrest Thomasine was made by a black, unless one may assume that the politicians who wanted to create the incident as a test and perhaps out of anti-Catholic sentiment being whipped up by Sidney Catts in his gubernatorial campaign, thought it would bear more weight with public opinion for a black to call for the arrest. . . . It is a good guess that the political climate of the day suggested to the instigation of the action that it would be seemly for them to have a black object to the Sisters teaching at St. Benedict’s.58

57 Copy of court file in the suit “Ex Parte Sister Mary Thomasine,” Law No. 778, Docket No. 3, Page 97. On file ASSJSA. It should be noted that Gibbs did not afford the same rights to black teachers.

58 Quinn, Story of a Nun, 205.
Several curious factors, however, lend support to the idea that the arrest was arranged by the Catholic Church itself, rather than its enemies, to force a test case of the 1913 law. First, there had been little discussion of the bill in the press, not even in the Catholic-friendly *Tampa Morning Tribune*, when it was proposed during the 1913 legislative session. More attention was paid to the Anti-Garb Bill that was proposed and passed in the House in May but failed in the Senate. This bill prohibited the use of sectarian clothing or religious insignia by public school teachers. It would have affected not only the Catholic Sisters, who wore habits and crosses, but also Protestants, such as some Methodists who wore Epworth League pins. Perhaps, as suggested before, the bill that prohibited whites from teaching “negroes” was seen as anti-black, rather than anti-Catholic and was, therefore, not considered very newsworthy. Second, the law that prohibited white persons from teaching blacks was signed into law on June 7, 1913, yet it was not enforced until the sudden arrest of the Sisters two and half years later. Third, if the petition was a legitimate complaint, why was it brought forward in St. Augustine, a historically Catholic community, rather than a place like Jacksonville, where anti-Catholicism was a strong influence? If planned as a test case, St. Augustine would have been a much friendlier venue. Fourth, why was the petitioner against the Sisters left without any clear identification? This was in great contrast to a highly publicized petition filed by some leading citizens of St. Augustine in the summer of 1913, which demanded that the use of public funds to support the Catholic free schools cease and led to the withdrawal of Sisters from employment in the public school system. Fifth, was it merely a coincidence that the day of the arrest, the day after Easter, coincided with the day of celebration to commemorate the arrival of the Sisters of St. Joseph from France fifty years before, specifically to teach blacks? Why were they celebrating the anniversary that day in April, when it was in September that the Sisters had arrived? It seems reasonable to propose that the Catholic Church did, indeed, arrange the petition to Governor Trammell that led to the arrest of the Sisters. Bishop Curley, a strong, young, and zealous leader, was not one to let the law go unchallenged. With the official separation of the Sisters of St. Joseph from the St. Johns County public school system in September of 1913 and with a strong parochial school association then in place, there would be no doubt that St. Benedict the Moor and the other black schools run by Catholic Sisters were private schools. Perhaps, with confidence that the Sisters would win, Bishop Curley chose to pursue a test case as suggested to Bishop Kenny by the diocese’s lawyer.
The prospect that Catts, an openly anti-Catholic candidate, might win the gubernatorial election the next year perhaps further persuaded him that it was time to pursue the matter.\footnote{Robert Rackleff states that the test case was “set up by the church,” but provides no documentation to substantiate the assertion. See Rackleff, “Anti-Catholicism and the Florida Legislature,” f.n. 20, pp. 358-359.}

The Sisters of St. Joseph were at the center of two legal cases, one of which ended the practice of Catholic Sisters teaching as part of the public school system and dealt with questions that continue to arise in addressing what the separation of church and state means. The second case clarified the distinction between the legislature’s authority over public and private institutions. It spoke more to the rights of whites than to those of blacks and upheld the right of the state to enforce the segregation of school teachers as well as students.

The cases may have played a role in the political success of Sidney Catts in his race for the governor’s office as he often made references to the Catholic threat to the public schools. For Governor Trammell, it provided a safe way for him to maintain the support of anti-Catholics without obviously attacking the Church. True, he signed into law the prohibition of whites teaching blacks in black schools, but when the case arose two and half years later, he merely told the sheriff to enforce the law. According to Stephen Kerber, Trammell’s political biographer, “Trammell may have been motivated by political ambition and religious bigotry, but no positive evidence exists to support such conclusions. It must be observed, however, that Trammell’s action must have pleased all nativists, racists and Catts supporters.”\footnote{Stephen Kerber, “Park Trammell and the Florida Democratic Senatorial Primary of 1916,” \textit{Florida Historical Quarterly}, Vol. 58 (January 1980), 266.} Trammell ran well in Florida’s rural counties and took the senate seat from Nathan Bryan, who was seen as being sympathetic to Catholics. Bishop Curley, the new, forceful bishop, openly fought Governor Catts’ Convent Inspection Law, a measure that became law in 1917 but was never enforced, and as suggested, may have engineered the test case in 1916. When Curley had been asked by the civil authorities to simply “withdraw the Sisters from the colored schools,” he replied that “he was the spiritual shepherd of white and colored alike and he would not desert one of his spiritual
children.” His leadership was noticed by his superiors, and in 1921 he was made the Archbishop of Baltimore, the highest ranking bishopric in the United States. He held the position until his death in 1947.

What of the Sisters? Once they had the firm support for strong parochial schools, the teaching Sisters were probably glad to be freed from the public school system which limited their ability to teach Catholic values. It is not known if Sister Thomasine, the heroine of the Catholic community, was party to the generation of the test case, if indeed, the Church was behind it. Because Sisters did not speak out in public, we do not know what she thought of the incident. It was probably good to have the ambiguity of the law settled and she, very likely, was simply pleased to serve to that end. For blacks, seemingly the last ones to be considered throughout the ordeal, there was really no change; the racism of the times continued. Now, at least, they were ensured the continuation of the availability of a Catholic education, the very reason the Sisters of Joseph came from France fifty years before.

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61 *Florida Catholic*, May 23, 1947, p. 3.

Figure 15. Bishop William Kenny. From McGoldrick, Beyond the Call. Used with permission.
Figure 16. Bishop Michael J. Curley. From McGoldrick, *Beyond the Call*. Used with permission.
CONCLUSION

The story of the Catholic Sisters of St. Augustine, Florida, from the mid-nineteenth century through the first decades of the twentieth century, is one of “firsts,” among them the first officially recognized convent school in Florida, the first Roman Catholic white order to minister to freedmen after the Civil War, and the first Catholic orphanage. Within the first six decades of their arrival Florida, these pioneering women of the veil, Sisters of Mercy followed by Sisters of St. Joseph, laid the foundations for the ongoing presence of the Catholic Church in Florida. This dissertation tells their stories as they carried on their ministries to both blacks and whites during a time of rapid change in the South.

The story of the Catholic women religious in Florida begins with the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy from Providence, Rhode Island, in 1859. Coming from New England, they were accustomed to strong anti-Catholic sentiments. What they found, however, was an old town with Catholic roots, and a people who readily accepted them. Their St. Mary’s Academy for white girls was a highly regarded institution and instilled the ideals of domesticity that were common to both Catholics and Protestants, with roots in seventeenth century Europe. Rather than drawing young women away to convent life, as Protestants feared, they instilled in their students a sense of submissiveness and piety, and taught them the drawing room skills expected of a lady. Yet, as Sister Elizabeth Kolmer has pointed out, “these women were apparently oblivious to concepts of the ‘the Victorian lady’ and ‘the cult of domesticity.’” Their example of their own submissiveness sprang from the vow of obedience they took when becoming women religious. The vow of obedience along with the vows of chastity and poverty were what defined women religious’ lives for them and set them apart from all others. This vow was tested when Bishop Verot insisted they go to Georgia during the Civil War to escape Union troops, only to find that he had led them into conditions much worse than those in St. Augustine.

The Sisters of Mercy returned to the Ancient City after the war and reopened St. Mary’s Academy. They were there when the eight Sisters of St. Joseph arrived from Le Puy, France, in 1866 to teach the newly freed slaves. The Sisters of Mercy provided much needed support for these French Sisters who could not speak English, were unaccustomed to the South, and impoverished. Unlike the Sisters of Mercy, the St. Joseph Sisters’ black students did not pay tuition. The support provided by the Sisters of Mercy and by other congregations throughout their journey to St. Augustine demonstrated the international network available to Catholic women religious around the world.

The Sisters of St. Joseph quickly began the work of their mission, and opened a school for black boys shortly after their arrival. The biggest obstacle was not really their initial lack of English speaking skills, but the competition they faced from the Protestant missionaries of the American Missionary Association (AMA) who were already well established in St. Augustine and other Florida communities.

The letters of the Sisters and the AMA missionaries sent back to their respective superiors show that the rivals were really quite the same in their sincere desires to save black souls. In addition to that desire, many of the AMA missionaries were motivated by a sense of needing to atone for the United States’ sin of supporting slavery, and by the desire to instill good Yankee values, such as hard work and thrift, to turn the former slaves into good citizens. The Sisters of St. Joseph, on the other hand, were motivated by an understanding that their own salvation depended upon obedience to the call to convert others to the “one true” (read Roman Catholic) faith. This explains why their emphasis was on Roman Catholic doctrine and piety rather than Bible study, and why they felt so passionate in opposing the Protestants. They were motivated by religious beliefs rather than political or social concerns about blacks or the future of the United States. Their desires were not entirely self-serving, however, for their unvarnished letters reveal a passion for the “dear blacks.” The ministry of the pioneer Sisters of St. Joseph, the first Catholic order dedicated to ministering to the needs of the freedmen after the Civil War,
was no token effort, but heartfelt. Their schools, whether for blacks or whites, were of high quality, following the same curriculum.

The letters from both the Sisters and the American Missionary Association Protestants allow a much fuller understanding of the competition between Catholics and Protestants as they vied for black souls after the Civil War, only to see the freedmen elude them both and establish their own black denominations. Heretofore, Sisters of St. Joseph were the prime storytellers for their predecessors, and only mentioned that the early Sisters were resisted in their efforts. So, too, the many studies of the American Missionary Association only note that there was Catholic resistance, but do not provide any detail. Through the letters the French Sisters of St. Joseph sent back to their Motherhouse in Le Puy, France, and the letters and reports the AMA missionaries submitted to their head office in New York, this dissertation presents a more complete picture. The story of the missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, shows the struggles and joys both sides encountered, and more clearly demonstrates how many blacks rose to the challenge and opportunities of their newfound freedom to reject the paternalistic spiritual offerings of white churches.

The Sisters of St. Joseph’s work among blacks, and poor whites too, spread to other communities in Florida, and by 1905, the Sisters had ten foundations, extending from Fernandina, to Ybor City, to Miami; most were in the northeast part of the state. The rivalry between the Protestants and Catholics was particularly intense during the Reconstruction Era. Reconstruction officially ended in 1876, but distrust between Catholics and Protestants remained. The 1877 and 1888 yellow fever epidemics, though tragic, provided opportunities for the Sisters of St. Joseph to minister to non-Catholics and gain good will. The nursing care the Sisters provided in Fernandina and Jacksonville earned them respect and gratitude from the stricken people of Northeast Florida. Several Sisters lost their own lives from the yellow jack.

At the same time Sisters were teaching at St. Joseph’s Academy, the girls’ school that was formerly St. Mary’s Academy, left to the Sisters of St. Joseph’s care when the Mercy Sisters

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left St. Augustine in 1869. Over the years it gained wide recognition for its excellence. The academy afforded great opportunity to influence young Catholics, but also to impart Catholic ideals to other youth, for many of their students were Protestants. Through their students, the Sisters of St. Joseph were sometimes able to voice their views in ways they could not themselves. As Coburn and Smith point out, “unlike white, Protestant women who honed their political skills and established a ‘public voice’ on social issues involving women and children, nuns did not. Limited . . . by ‘convent manners’ that emphasized humility, obedience, selflessness, and public silence, nuns demonstrated their influence but rarely gave voice to it.”

What the Sisters could not do, alumnae from St. Joseph’s Academy, such as May Mann Jennings, perhaps the most politically powerful woman in nineteenth century Florida, could do. Had May been Catholic, rather than Baptist, the way to the Governor’s Mansion would have been closed to her. But the Christian social values and skills that she learned at the Academy remained a part of her life and were channeled toward her statewide endeavors, thus enabling the Sisters to have an impact on the state indirectly. The extensive work of Sister Mary Ann among the poor and needy of Jacksonville also spoke loudly and won her the devotion of the residents and officials of the city of Jacksonville, who affectionately called her “Jacksonville’s Angel of Mercy.”

The last decade of the nineteenth century was a time of comfortable progress for the Sisters of St. Joseph. Their schools and academies were well established and highly regarded, including the fine facility for African Americans in St. Augustine, St. Cecelia’s School, later renamed after St. Benedict the Moor. At a totally unexpected moment, a crushing blow came, not from Protestants, but from their own bishop. Formerly warm and supportive of the Sisters’ work, Bishop John Moore’s abrupt removal of the Mother Superior General Lazarus L’hostal stunned her, the Sisters, and their superiors in France. The Bishop had deposed her on the pretext that she had disobeyed a papal decree, ironically one that was intended to protect Sisters’ from Superiors who abused their power. The only explanation is that Bishop Moore, who had recently suffered a stroke, was not in his right mind. It demonstrates the extreme power bishops

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held at that time, for even though he clearly was misapplying the decree, no one questioned him or objected. In Mother Lazarus’ response to the situation, the power of the vow of obedience is starkly clear. The episode was devastating to the community and brought an end to the French mission, and Irish Sisters filled the places of leadership for decades to come.

As the new century progressed into its second decade, the anti-Catholicism so lacking in the antebellum South, suddenly struck the Sisters. In response to complaints by some leading citizens, Florida’s Attorney General ruled that the Sisters’ employment as part of the public school system, something that had been a part of several counties’ education programs since 1878, was unconstitutional. As a result, the Sisters withdrew from the public schools and the diocese began building a statewide parochial school system. Then, a rash of anti-Catholic legislation came out of the Florida legislature. A 1913 law making it illegal for whites to teach blacks in black schools was directed primarily at the Sisters of St. Joseph. The work they had come to Florida to do and had carried on for fifty years was suddenly illegal. This dissertation proposes that the arrest of the Sisters who taught at St. Benedict the Moor School in St. Augustine, on the Monday after Easter in 1916, was engineered by Bishop Curley as a way to settle the constitutional questions attached to the 1913 law. The Sisters were vindicated when, as the Bishop must have expected and hoped, the judge ruled the law unconstitutional and inapplicable to private schools. It is tempting to consider the Sisters’ teaching of their black students contrary to the 1913 law was an act of civil disobedience on their part. This view, however, disregards the roles of bishops Kenny and Curley in directing the Sisters’ actions. The Sisters’ arrest is more rightly interpreted to be a result of their faithfulness to their vow of obedience to their Superiors rather than an act of civil disobedience against their government.

The arrest of the three Sisters of St. Joseph was a major turning point for the Sisters and the Catholic Church in Florida. The court’s ruling cleared the way for the Sisters to continue their ministry. The Sisters’ nearly simultaneous withdrawal from teaching in the public school system alleviated the ambiguities of women religious teaching in a secular environment. There was, however, another consequence; it also removed them from regular contact with non-Catholics, thereby limiting their spheres of influence.

This change was in keeping with a new Code of Canon Law adopted by the Catholic Church in 1917-1918. Earlier decrees in 1900 and 1901 had elevated the status of Sisters who
had ministries outside convents, placing them on a par with cloistered Sisters. On the one hand, the change was a welcomed recognition of the Sisters’ work, but it brought with it serious consequences. The Vatican now imposed restrictive regulations and required detailed reports every five years. The result was that “innovation, risk taking, and responding to the contemporary needs of people, which were the trademarks of the sisterhoods prior to 1920, were discouraged in favor of rigidity, uniformity, regulation, and following ‘the letter of the law.’ The vow of obedience became the overriding concern.” As Amy Koehlinger clearly explains, because of their new status, the Sisters’ ministries were “restricted largely to established Catholic spheres – congregational schools and hospitals and diocesan parishes.” The wide-ranging spheres of influence they enjoyed in the nineteenth century were now limited by the imposition of a “cloistral mentality” that distanced them from the world, resulting in a “‘convent culture’ that dominated religious life for women from the 1920s through the 1950s.”

In Michael J. Curley, the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine had a bishop who was progressive in his thinking, and the new canon law’s impact on them may have been less harsh than it was for other congregations. He promoted higher education for the Sisters, beyond the Teacher Training Institute they had established in 1890, and allowed some to attend Catholic University of America to earn advanced degrees. Such training enable the Sisters to maintain excellence in their schools and the standards for education in general were elevated. Curley also urged stronger recruitment of new Sisters from the United States, and the abandonment of the European class distinction of lay and choir Sisters. The Sisters also voted in their first presidential election in 1928, when Catholic Al Smith was a candidate, a sign of the Catholic Church’s new place in mainstream American society.

The Sisters’ ministries continued, and, indeed expanded after 1920, with the addition of four hospitals, four homes (for the aged, unwed mothers and two children’s homes, and five special education centers), and the establishment of eighty-seven new foundations between 1911

4 Coburn and Smith, *Spirited Lives*, 224.

and 1962. But, the impact of the new canon law is evident. The new foundations, mostly new schools, were well within the Sisters’ normal sphere. Noticeably lacking are new schools for African Americans, represented only by St. Pius V School, opened in Jacksonville in 1921, and Saint Augustine School, opened in Miami in 1956-1959, during the era of segregation. The days of pioneering, risky ministries, like those of the first Sisters of St. Joseph in the nineteenth century, were over. The twentieth century Sisters of St. Joseph continued to build on the foundation laid by the eight French Sisters from Le Puy, but now in much less controversial ways.

As nuns, the Sisters assumed a life that was counter to the prevailing ideas concerning a woman's domestic responsibilities to marry and raise her own children, duties that were considered essential to maintain stability in society. It was their commitment to the Rules of their orders, their disciplined lives, and their devotion to a life of service that empowered them to become beloved and respected members of Florida’s Catholic community as they mentored rising generations of Southern women and black and white youth, and helped the “dear neighbor.” The effectiveness of their ministries was even recognized by Protestant women who “envied, resented, admired, and competed with nuns.” Catharine Beecher, who largely defined American ideas of domesticity, explained that her image of unified society “was a Protestant parallel to the Catholic pattern of close interaction between social and religious forms. Protestant women should have the same social support for their religious and moral activities as Catholic nuns received from their society” rather than being relegated to quiet lives at home.

Mary J. Oates clearly shows how the Catholic Sisters’ freedom from the constraints of American domesticity allowed them to carry on wider works of mercy that most other women, Protestant or Catholic, were unable to pursue. The Sisters’ ability to devote their entire lives to such service set them apart from most of their Protestant counterparts; few AMA teachers in Florida spent their lives serving the freedmen. In the American Catholic Church, social welfare

6 Coburn and Smith, Spirited Lives, 222.

missions were performed by Sisters, not the laity, for in the nineteenth century, most Catholics were poor and unable to support institutions or ongoing ministries. Catholic laywomen, such as the “Ladies of the Roman Catholic Church,” or “Daughters of Isabella” would, however, hold fundraisers, such as fairs, to support the Sisters’ work. The Sisters, because they were free from family responsibilities, were able to fulfill the Catholic principle that “the gift of personal service [not just the contribution of money] was an essential component of the definition of charity.”8 Reliance on the Sisters’ work with the poor and needy meant that Catholic lay women did not form the same kinds of social service groups that became the hallmark of Protestant benevolent efforts in the nineteenth century.

The story of the nuns in St. Augustine shows that the strong anti-Catholicism associated with the North in the 1850s did not hold sway in the South during that period, though it flared up briefly in the 1910s. It also demonstrates the irony that these women, whose lives were restricted by their religious vows, particularly the vow of obedience, were at the same time, because of those restrictions, free to go to strange lands in ways that were "out of bounds" for most other women, as demonstrated by their successful establishment of black schools. Their teachings for white girls, however, were consistent with the prevailing values and prescribed behaviors for American women, as evidenced by the stories of the alumnae from St. Joseph’s Academy in St. Augustine. In that regard, these supposedly rebellious and dangerous women were actually part of the establishment, fulfilling the expectations of a white, male dominated society.

Writing a dissertation about the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of St. Joseph in St. Augustine has offered an opportunity to tell more fully the story of these remarkable women and to evaluate their significance in Catholic, women’s, and black history as it was played out in Florida and the South. It also contributes to a broader understanding of St. Augustine’s place in educational development and reforms in Florida and the South during the Reconstruction and Progressive eras.

Father Pierre Medaille, the Jesuit priest who assisted the first Sisters of St. Joseph in establishing their new congregation in 1650, defined their mission as “to practice all the holy

spiritual and corporal works of mercy of which women are capable.” The early Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine accomplished their mission admirably.

APPENDIX A

ESTABLISHMENTS OF THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF ST. AUGUSTINE,
1866-1921
APPENDIX A

Establishments of the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine, 1866-1921

First Foundation, St. Augustine, 1866
- Free schools for blacks and white boys: 1867
- School for white girls: 1869
- St. Joseph’s Academy for white girls: 1877
- Teaching Apaches at Fort Marion: 1887
- St. Agnes, North City: 1889
- St. Cecelia’s School/St. Benedict the Moor for blacks: 1898
- Cathedral Parish School for whites: 1916

Second Foundation, Savannah, Georgia, 1867
- Under Diocese of Savannah: 1870

Third Foundation, Mandarin, 1874
- Free schools for blacks and whites: 1874
- St. Joseph’s Academy for whites: 1881
- St. Joseph’s Parochial School for whites: 1916

Fourth Foundation, Jacksonville, 1868
- Free schools for blacks and whites: 1868
- St. Mary’s Home: 1886
- St. Joseph’s Academy: 1900
- Immaculate Conception School: 1891
- St. Pius School for blacks: 1921

Fifth Foundation, Fernandina, 1872
- Free schools for blacks and whites: 1872
- St. Peter Claver School for blacks: 1874
- St. Joseph’s Academy: 1879

Sixth Foundation, Palatka, 1876
- Day schools for blacks and whites: 1876
Academy of the Sacred Heart 1881  
Seventh Foundation, Elkton, 1882  
St. Ambrose School for whites 1882  
Eighth Foundation, Orlando, 1889  
St. Joseph’s Academy 1891  
Ninth Foundation, Ybor City, 1891  
St. Joseph’s Academy for whites 1892  
St. Benedict the Moor School for blacks 1903  
Tenth Foundation, Miami, 1905  
St. Catherine Academy 1905
APPENDIX B

WPA CHURCH RECORDS,
FLORIDA COLLECTION, STATE LIBRARY OF FLORIDA
APPENDIX B

WPA CHURCH RECORDS, Florida Collection, State Library of Florida

Black churches established up to 1900. Some white churches are included as indicated.

FERNANDINA
1864  First Colored Baptist Church
1870  Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal (AME)
1870  New Zion Baptist Church
1885  Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church
1886  Mt. Calvary Baptist Church
1890  Ebenezer Baptist Church (First Colored Baptist Church)
Note: No black Roman Catholic Church, predominantly Baptist

PALATKA
1858  St. Monica’s Roman Catholic Church (white and black)
1866  Bethel AME
1869  Mt. Tabor First Baptist Church
1882  Payne’s Chapel AME
1882  St. Mary’s Episcopal (originally St. Philip’s; changed name in 1907)
1886  Mt. Nebo Baptist Church
1889  Mt. Zion Primitive Baptist Church
1890  Mt. Vernon Presbyterian Church
Note: No black Roman Catholic Church

ST. AUGUSTINE
1565  The Cathedral, Roman Catholic (white and black)
1763  Trinity Episcopal Church (white)
1824  Memorial Presbyterian Church (white)
1833  Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church. White and black members, but mostly “colored.”
1845  First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, King & Riberia Street, (white)
1870  Trinity AME Church, on Bridge Street.
1873  New St. Paul AME Church, 85 Central Avenue
1874  First Baptist Church, 81 St. Francis Street
1875  St. Mary’s Baptist Church, 69 Washington Street
1876  Mather Perit Presbyterian Church
1881  Zion Baptist Church, 96 Evergreen Avenue
1886  North City Baptist Church, next to 15 Bernard Street
1888  St. Luke’s AME Church, Evergreen Avenue
1891  St. Cyprian’s Protestant Episcopal Church, corner of Lovit and Central
1898  St. James Baptist Church, corner of W. King and Whitney
1911  St. Benedict the Moor Catholic Church. Begun in 1909, first black Catholic church in Florida.

JACKSONVILLE (a couple in Mandarin, as noted)
1834  St. John’s Episcopal Church (white)
1838  Bethel Baptist Church at corner of Pine (Main) and Union Street. Name changed to Bethel Baptist Institutional Church when it was incorporated on November 16, 1894.
1838  First Baptist Church (white).
1840  First Presbyterian Church (white, no mention of black members)
1847  Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church (white and black)
1858  First Baptist Church of Mandarin (black?)
1859  Mandarin Methodist Church (white?), Rt. 6, 2 ¼ mi. SE of Mandarin
1860  St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, Loretto (Mandarin) (white and black)
1865  Midway AME Church, 1654 Van Buren (First AME in Florida)
1866  Mt. Zion AME Church, 201 E. Beaver
1868  Mt. Olive AME Church, Pippin and Franklin Streets
1868  St. Lukes Missionary Baptist Church, E. Church Street (from Bethel Baptist)
1870  Church of the Good Shepherd Episcopal (white)
1870  St. Paul AME Church, 201 Johnson Street
1871  Spring-Hill Baptist Church, Buckman Street (from Bethel Baptist)
1872  First Baptist Church of Oakland, 1137 Jessie Street
1872  St. Andrews Episcopal Church (white)
1873  Mt. Zion AME Church, on Route 6, U.S. Hwy 47 to Mandarin
1875  St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church (white)
1875  Union Congregational Church, 236 W. Church Street
1877  St. John’s Lutheran Evangelical Church, Laura & Ashley Streets (white)
1878  New Hope AME Church, Tyler Street
1878  Shiloh Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church, Logan Street (from Bethel Baptist)
1878  St. Johns Missionary Baptist Church, Albert Street (from Bethel Baptist)
1878  St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church, Stonewall Street
1879  Mt. Lilla Missionary Baptist Church, 638 W. 2nd Street
1880  Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church, 6 miles North of Mandarin
1880  Church of Our Savior Episcopal, in Mandarin (white)
1881  Church of Our Savior Episcopal (white)
1881  Harmony Missionary Baptist Church, Julia and State streets
1882  Mt. Olive Primitive Baptist Church, Cleveland Street
1882  St. Philip’s Protestant Episcopal Church (colored).
1882  Temple Aharath Chesed, Laura & Ashley
1883  First Christian Church, Church Street
1883  St. Philip’s Episcopal (white)
1884  Day Spring Baptist Church, 1105 Jefferson Street
1884  Union Church, Lawton Street
1885  All Saints Episcopal Church (white)
1886  New Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church, Hart Avenue and Barnett Street
1886  Phillips Congregational Church, South Jacksonville
1887  Mt. Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church, Ashley and Van Buren streets, renamed Pleasant Gove Primitive Baptist after 1902.
1888  St. Matthew Baptist Church, 28th Street
1888  White-Springs Baptist Church, Louisiana Street
1889  Asbury AME Church, 3208 Phyllis Street
1889  Central Baptist Church, 115 W. State Street
1889  Seventh Day Adventist Church, Jessie Street
1889  St. Joseph Methodist Episcopal (from Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal)
1889  St. Paul’s Church, Jacksonville Beach
1890  Emmanuel Episcopal Church (white)
1891  Jacksonville Church of New Jerusalem
1891  Jacksonville Citadel (Salvation Army)
1892  Beulah Missionary Baptist Church, Ionia Street
1892  Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, Dora and Spruce
1892  St. Stephens AME Church, 5th and Davis streets (sponsored by New Hope AME)
1893  St. Mary’s Chapel Episcopal (white)
1896  Springfield Advent Christian Church, 16th Street
1898  St. James AME Church, 2196 Forest Street
1899  Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church, Barnett Street
1899  Mt. Moriah AME Church, 101 Oak Street
1900  Mt. Moriah Baptist Church, Louisiana Street
1900  Jacksonville Jewish Center, W. 3rd and Silver streets
1915  Holy Rosary Catholic Church, Laura Street and Cottage Avenue (sponsored by Immaculate Conception). Closed 1922?
1921  St. Paul’s Roman Catholic, Park and Acosta streets. Possibly should be St. Pius V.
APPENDIX C

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April 4, 2008

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_Beyond the Call: The Legacy of the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine, Florida._

The excerpts to be reproduced are selected images: map of France; Le Puy, France; portrait of Bishop Augustin Verot; portrait of Bishop John Moore; portrait of Bishop William Kenny; portrait of Bishop Michael Curley; pioneer Sisters of St. Joseph; O'Reilly House; Sisters of St. Joseph's first class, 1867; St. Benedict the Moor School, St. Augustine; portrait of Mother Theresa Joseph Brown; St. Joseph's Academy, May Mann Jennings' class in 1880; portrait of Mother Lazarus I.' hostal; and from the Archives collection, a portrait of Sister Mary Ann Hoare.

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Sincerely,

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Barbara Elizabeth Miller Mattick (1950–) was born in South Carolina, but grew up in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. She received her bachelor’s degree in history with honors from Emory University in 1972. While working for the Florida Department of State in Tallahassee, Florida, she completed a master’s degree in American history from Florida State University in 1976. Her thesis was “Tallahassee and the 1841 Yellow Fever Epidemic.” Subsequently, she worked temporarily for the Florida Department of State as Assistant Historian for the restoration of the 1902 State Capitol. In 1980, Mrs. Mattick began work with the State Library of Florida. After completing a master of library science degree in 1985, she served as Research Librarian for the Florida Collection at the State Library of Florida. She returned to the field of historic preservation in 1988 as staff in the Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Historic Preservation, working primarily with the National Register of Historic Places Program. In 1998, she completed a master’s degree in anthropology, focusing in archaeology. Her thesis, “Bone Toothbrushes of the 19th and 20th Centuries: A History and Typology Based on the Robert Collection,” demonstrates that bone toothbrushes are excellent dating tools for archaeologists. Since 2005, Mrs. Mattick has been the Chief of the Bureau of Historic Preservation, and teaches an introductory course on historic preservation for the Public History Program in the History Department at Florida State University. Aside from a few short journal articles, her publications include “Ministries in Black and White: The Catholic Nuns of St. Augustine, 1859-1869,” which appears in “Lives Full of Struggle and Triumph: Southern Women, Their Institutions, and Their Communities,” edited by Bruce L. Clayton and John A. Salmond and published by University Press of Florida in 2003.