



May 9, 1979

Librarian
Maryknoll Seminary
Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545

Dear Sir:

Since 1968 our institution has occupied the property formerly used as a seminary by the Maryknoll Fathers. Unfortunately, we do not have access to any history of this property prior to our purchase. Only bits and pieces of information have been gleaned from our brief contacts with visitors who attended classes here in days gone by.

I would be interested in securing through photocopy, purchase or loan any materials of an historical interest regarding the Venard property.

I would be most appreciative if you could correspond with me in regard to the availability of such materials. If necessary, I am willing to visit with you in person to secure information.

Sincerely,

David C. McClain

David C. McClain, Head Librarian
Murphy Memorial Library
Baptist Bible College

MARYKNOLL FATHERS
MARYKNOLL, NEW YORK
10545

May 30, 1979

Mr. David C. McClain
Head Librarian
Murphy Memorial Library
Clarks Summit, PA 18411

Dear Sir,

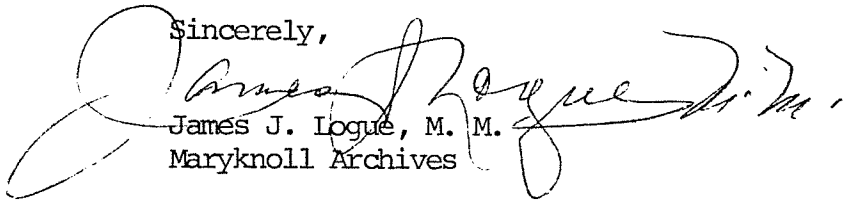
Our Librarian, Fr. Brown, asked me to look up the information you asked about in your letter of May 9th and I am sorry that it was not possible to answer you before this.

We have no records of the property before 1916, but I am sure these will be found in the County records because it is most probable that a title search would have been made for each of the transactions.

I have made a rather general outline of the history of the property during the time Maryknoll occupied it. If there are any particular questions which would be of interest to you I am sure we will find the answers for you. To tell the truth, most of our records deal with the scholastic and disciplinary affairs of a run-of-the-mill school, but occasionally there are some accounts of wider interest hidden among the reports and transcripts.

If I can be of any further service please feel free to write me.

Sincerely,


James J. Logue, M. M.
Maryknoll Archives

JJL/1

Enc.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE VENARD

When Maryknoll was established by the Catholic Bishops in 1911, it was recommended that a minor seminary be established also; since Latin was not a major course in the majority of American high schools, and since it was the language used in the major seminary for Philosophy and Theology it was felt that the only practical solution to the problem was to "do it yourself". Bishop Michael Hoban, of Scranton, had been one of the most interested in the foreign mission idea, and he invited Maryknoll to establish the school in his Diocese of Scranton.

Maryknoll in New York opened its first classes in September of 1912 and the following year the Venard Apostolic School was inaugurated in a rented house on Clay Avenue in Scranton. The six students were sent to the Jesuit College of St. Thomas, which later became the University of Scranton. Two years later the students were moved to New York and a search began for a more appropriate site in the Diocese of Scranton.

In 1916 the Maryknoll Superior examined a score of possible properties, but a letter from Fr. Edward Flood, pastor of Our Lady of the Snows Parish in Clarks Summit, brought to his notice the Willow Brook Farm in Clarks Summit, owned by Archibald C. Courtwright, and the property was bought on April 25, 1916. It comprised 135 acres, the farm house, a large rectangular barn, a well, pond, ice-house, chicken and pig houses. There were 50 acres of plow land, 40 acres of timothy, 25 acres of pasture and an orchard. The recently ordained Father (later Bishop) James E. Walsh, arrived with five of the former Clay Avenue students to take possession of the new Maryknoll establishment, on July 10, 1916. Later on the same day the first Maryknoll Brother, Thomas McCann, arrived and the work of converting a farmhouse into a boarding school began. Three weeks later an ancient Model-T truck lurched into the farmyard and discharged its cargo of furniture, pigs, chickens, and four theologians from Maryknoll to help the younger students rehabilitate the place. Fortunately, one of the new arrivals, Bernie Meyer, was a born and bred farmer from Iowa. He spent a week teaching the boys from the sidewalks of many East Coast cities how to take care of the pigs, chickens and cows. He also hired two local farmers to take care of the field work.

School opened on September 8, 1916, with a faculty of four and a student body of 29, ranging from first year high school to second year college. The Maryknoll innovation was the addition of one hour of manual labor every day to the regular school schedule, with the result that any improvements on the property (except, of course, those which demanded professional efforts in construction, plumbing, electricity, etc.) were done by the students during the next 50 years.

In 1917 there were 36 students and when 40 arrived for the 1918 opening the first brick building was built and served until 1921, when the first half of the main building was finished. In 1929 the south wing was completed to accommodate 160 students. From 1918 to 1954 the Maryknoll Sisters attended to the cooking and the laundry. Maryknoll Brothers replaced the hired field hands, and students were on call for any work that did not interfere with studies. Camp Venard was inaugurated in the summer of 1925 but the lake was found to be too dirty and dangerous for the campers, so the following year the swimming pool was built by damming the overflow of the lake with a 12-foot wall.

During the great depression of the 30's the farm proved to be the mainstay of the Venard; potatoes, cabbage and squash were the order of the day - every day. Eggs were sold to buy meat; hay was swapped for oats which, after a night of simmering on the banked boilers, would appear in the morning as oatmeal. No one would get up on a winter morning before hearing the machine-gun sound of the steam entering the radiators. It was a great preparation for northern China, as well as for any other mission country. At least a thousand trees - fruit, pines and sugar maples from Vermont, were planted but the cows were sold when it was found more reasonable to buy milk at 6 cents a quart than to attend our small herd.

In 1933 it was decided to make the Venard a four-year college course since Maryknoll could no longer cope with the number of applicants for the Philosophy section. This continued until 1947, when a great number of ex-G.I.'s applied for admission to Maryknoll. The college was moved to Lakewood, N.J. and later to Glen Ellyn, Ill. and the Venard became a high school with special classes for the new candidates who had not a good foundation in Latin, even though they were college students.

The Venard continued with this program until the publication of the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" in December, 1963, which made the vernacular the liturgical language of the Church. The changes came slowly, but the days of the Venard were numbered since it was no longer necessary to insist on Latin as a "sine qua non", and it was sold in 1968.