

4.3 - Records of the Houses, Frederick (Frederick County, Md.)

Background on the Frederick House and Novitiate

By the mid-eighteenth century, Jesuit missionaries had begun to evangelize among the settlers of the Monocacy Valley, a population that consisted of the planters and those enslaved by them who moved there from Southern Maryland, the tenants of properties acquired by these planters, and German-speaking Catholics. The patronage of these planters, most notably Charles Carroll of Annapolis, enabled John Williams, S.J., to establish St. John's Chapel and a residence in Frederick in 1765. Its missionaries visited private chapels throughout western Maryland, traveling through mountains to points as far west as Harper's Ferry and Martinsburg, Virginia.

By the time the Jesuits returned to Frederick during the Restoration of the order, Frederick County had become a center for Catholic education in Maryland. Reverend John DuBois lived in the Frederick House between 1792 and 1805. DuBois remained its Superior until 1811. DuBois became the founding president of the Mt. St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg and worked with Elizabeth Seton to establish the nation's first parochial school for girls, and an institute to train women religious.

By the time Francis Malevé, S.J., became Superior of Frederick in 1811, Catholic institutions were ministering to a diverse population. Frederick had become a transportation nexus, with its inn and taverns serving as a resting point for migrating planters and the individuals who were enslaved by them. The region also served as a temporary home for many of the laborers - including Irish immigrants and both free and enslaved Blacks - who built the pikes leading to the National Road, the C & O Canal, and the B & O Railroad.

With the support of the elite Carroll family and other benefactors, and after the arrival of John McElroy, S.J., as the Superior of Frederick in 1822, the Frederick Jesuits initiated an expansion that complemented the institutions established in Emmitsburg. In 1824, the Daughters of Charity established a convent at St. John's and opened the St. John's Female Benevolent and Free School. Soon after, McElroy raised money to construct a private boarding school that offered a classical education to young boys; in 1829, St. John's Literary Institution (also known as St. John's College) opened. In 1834, the newly established Maryland Province transferred its Novitiate from White Marsh to Frederick. In 1846, the Daughters of Charity left Frederick, and the Sisters of Visitation of Georgetown replaced them.

As the Novitiate began to accept increasing numbers of novices, the missionary activity of the Frederick community deepened. The Frederick Jesuits and novitiates still traveled long distances to missions and helped establish incorporated churches at several of them. Two of these, St. Mary's in Petersville and St. Ignatius of Loyola in Urbana, were predominantly African American parishes. In addition, novices and scholastics taught catechism, visited the sick, and heard confessions at state and municipal social agencies, including the Maryland Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, the Montevue Asylum, and the Frederick County Jail.

In 1903 the Province moved its novitiate to St. Andrew-on-the-Hudson in New York and transferred its churches and properties to the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

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