

# CATHOLIC

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EARLY YEARS IN COLUMBUS  
OF THE SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME  
By Sister Ann Feth, S.N.D. de N.  
(Continued)

### Teacher Training and Teacher Personnel of the 1850's

Shortly after the end of the school term, the Sisters closed their convent and went to Cincinnati for the few remaining weeks of summer. There they made their eight-day retreat and made use of the instruction and discussion with other teachers designed to improve their teaching skills.

This simple method of pedagogical improvement was quite consistent with, and probably superior to, that used by public school teachers of the day. There were no normal schools conducted by the state, and, between 1850 and 1875, only about seven private or local normal schools were established; and it is "difficult to determine how adequately teacher training was being done in them." (1) There were occasional teacher institutes of two or three days conducted by the state but these were not well attended. (2)

The state at this time made no attempts at certification of teachers. This was done by local school boards. (3) In Columbus, one could qualify to teach in the public schools after passing an examination relative to the grade of school for which the application was made, but all applicants were expected to understand arithmetic, geography and grammar, to know phonics and to have a general acquaintance with physiology. (4) That the teachers in the two Catholic schools would have measured up in such an examination might safely be determined by the fact that the teachers were able to exhibit at the close of the academic year a praiseworthy oral and written demonstration of the students' work.

The second year of the Sisters' work in Columbus proceeded without any unusual occurrence. There was an unexplained decrease in enrollment at Saint Patrick School. However, this was the period of gold-seeking migrations to California, and many citizens joined the westward movement. (5) During the following school year, Father Edward Fitzgerald, who was then pastor, wrote that "some of our Western emigrants are coming back," (6) so their leaving may explain the decreased enrollment at Saint Patrick's.

Faculty members in the two schools were changed with regularity during this and the following years. Since each faculty consisted of two members, a change

meant a 50 per cent turnover. A like turnover prevailed in the Columbus public schools: of the thirty-two teachers engaged in the school year, 1854-1855, only fifteen were teaching in the Columbus schools during the next year, and of these fifteen, only eight continued to teach during the following year.(7) The problem of teacher turnover in the Catholic and public school systems differed, however. In the Catholic schools, a teacher who was changed almost invariably continued her work of teaching in another school; incoming personnel usually had had experience elsewhere. State Commissioner Thomas W. Harvey, however, reported in 1872, that every year one-third of the public school teachers left the profession, that "teaching was a temporary calling engaged in by young men while getting under way and by young ladies unable to find some more attractive or more remunerative employment, only to be abandoned without regret at the first favorable opportunity." (8)

#### The Interdict at Saint Patrick's, 1857

The opening of school in the fall of 1857 brought last minute preparations for the reception of Confirmation in both parishes. The first months were also to involve the Sisters in a very trying experience to which the Annals, significantly, make not a single reference. This was the interdict at Saint Patrick's.

For some time complaints had reached the archbishop concerning the management of affairs at Saint Patrick's. From the beginning, Father Borgess and Father Meagher had disagreed over the administration of the sacraments to the English-speaking people. Meagher insisted from the pulpit, that they were to come to him; however, he was absent on occasion and it was a great source of worry to Borgess that people died without the sacraments. (9) This situation, reported at the close of 1852, seems to have cleared, because Borgess wrote, in August of 1854, that between him and Meagher there were no disagreements except those relative to the management and division of the graveyard. (10) Moreover, the two pastors collaborated on bringing the Sisters to Columbus the following year.

By February of 1856, there were again complaints that the sick were not being cared for by Meagher. (11) In the same month, Borgess wrote a long letter to the archbishop, who had apparently scolded him for administering to the English-speaking Catholics again. Father Borgess maintained that he had deliberately avoided criticism of the Irish priest because of the attitude of the archbishop, that he had patiently observed all sorts of scandals, and had borne with abuses both personal and otherwise. He implied that Meagher was anxious to give the sacraments to the English-speaking Catholics only because of the additional money this brought him in stipends. (12) Archbishop Purcell wrote "A very unbecoming letter" on the back of this communication, but by August of the next year he had seen fit to ask for Father Meagher's resignation.

There were other difficulties. Though there was still a heavy debt on the church and school at Saint Patrick's, a fine new convent was being erected. This added another burden to the parish, numbering many poor people. Moreover, Meagher used a very casual form of bookkeeping for his parish accounts. (13) Some of the parishioners wrote to the archbishop complaining of these things. Father Meagher was also accused of being drunk "on the cars" but in his reply to the archbishop, proferring his resignation, he said he hoped to disprove that point and other charges. (14) At one point the archbishop came to Columbus and questioned Sister Mary Augusta about what she knew. Her biographer says she tried to excuse appearances that were unfavorable, (15) though she could not deny them.

On the thirteenth of September, 1857, the archbishop came to Columbus to administer confirmation in both parishes - in the morning at Holy Cross and in the evening at Saint Patrick's. At the close of the ceremonies in the latter church, the archbishop told the congregation that he was withdrawing Father Meagher from them and would send them Father Edward Fitzgerald, a newly ordained priest, in his place. What happened after this announcement is best told in the Catholic Telegraph in an article which gave the truth of the story several weeks after a completely erroneous version had appeared in the secular paper (16).

. . . a number of ignorant and violent persons, who seem to have been well trained in low groceries, proceeded, with vulgar brawling and gesticulations, to strike the doors with their clenched hands, insisting that the appointment of the Pastor and the control of the church property belonged to them. They appeared to think the Blessed Sacrament also belonged to them, for they became its jailers, having nailed up the church and allowed no priest to approach the Tabernacle for several days. On Monday morning, the Archbishop, from the altar of the Church of the Holy Cross, declared the church and all the congregation who should not sign a protest against, and condemnation of, those sacrilegious and schismatical proceedings, interdicted, and excommunicated all who had any hand, act, or part in shutting up the church, or opposing ecclesiastical authority. During the week, we understand the ringleaders in this scandalous affair made eloquent speeches in the schoolroom and passed resolutions quite fit for Exeter Hall! (17)

"Control of the church property" referred to the fact that the archbishop desired the new convent under construction to be used as a rectory for the new pastor. Those of the parish who wished to be considered its trustees, objected to this. (18)

School was closed for over a month. The majority of the people in the parish wished to accede to the archbishop's wishes, but before the Catholic Telegraph article appeared, some were confused by stories that the signatures of the implicated people alone were required, and others were being agitated by the ringleaders, who were collecting money for Father Meagher. (19) The presence of Meagher in the city every few days did not help. Finally, on Sunday, October 4, the keys were turned over to Father Bernard Hengehold, who had been authorized by the archbishop to receive them. Two days later the letter in which the people asked forgiveness of the archbishop was mailed. (20) Then Father Fitzgerald came to the city but evidently did not say Mass at Saint Patrick's until October 18. (21)

The Annals give no hint of any of these events. As far as the Sisters are concerned, the trouble might never have existed. Yet their convent was just across the field from the locked and barred church. The cook, now Sister Mary, and the two teachers at Saint Patrick's had their daily Mass with the children at the parish up to September 13. Undoubtedly, they now went each morning with Sister Mary Augusta and the second teacher at Holy Cross to the German parish for Mass. The church was opened on Sundays but the Sisters dared not go where the laymen were leading the people in prayer in defiance of the archbishop. (22)

To the prudence and charity of the new young pastor, not quite twenty-four years old, was due much of the resolution of the difficulties. He conciliated the two factions in the congregation, induced the ringleaders to make confession, and settled the parish finances. Father Meagher went over the accounts with him, incomplete as they were. Fitzgerald wrote that Meagher received him with kindness

and "warned me of the rocks on which he split." The people, the new pastor found, were "good, honest, sober, and industrious." Of all he spoke to, and he went around a good bit to gain good will, there were only three or four who had not been to confession in the preceding few months. "Father Meagher," he said, "does all to help me. Yet I will feel more at ease when he leaves the city." Fitzgerald stayed with Father Borgess until rooms could be completed in the convent-turned-rectory. (23) Each morning, at least for a while, the Sisters brought his breakfast to him from their convent. (24)

On October 16, Father Fitzgerald wrote that the Sisters were ready to open school as soon as Meagher left Columbus; (25) but he had a special problem with the teacher of the boys since this man, who also served as organist, had been among those who had defied the archbishop. The Sisters believed the boys' teacher had always been an upright and pious man, but the new pastor considered his continued employment as improper. (26) Purcell appeared to agree, because Fitzgerald personally taught the boys' "school" for a time after classes resumed on October 26. (27)

At the close of the year, Father Fitzgerald expressed his disappointment because the "schools" in his parish received very little support from the people. Earlier, this lack of support had caused hardship for the Sisters. Their situation had improved somewhat when classes were opened at Holy Cross, for the German parish had a rather well-organized School Society to pay the teachers' salaries. (28) Fitzgerald feared he would "have to pay the Teacher from the revenues arising from the pews." (29)

#### Developments during the School Year 1858-1859

During the summer of 1858, Sister Mary Augusta succeeded in persuading Sister Louise to appoint a new superior at Columbus. Sister Mary Gonzaga (Verhaegen) was named head of the little community, but Sister Mary Augusta continued as teacher of the "first school", that is, the older girls, at Holy Cross.

During the school year, 1858-1859, a Blessed Virgin Sodality was established by Sister Mary Gonzaga at Saint Patrick's. Six or seven girls made their act of consecration on December 8, 1858. During the following summer, some married ladies were received into a sodality. These met every Friday afternoon at half-past four, heard a short instruction and then recited prayers. (30) For several years, similar organizations had been functioning at Holy Cross parish. Before the Sisters went there to teach, both a young ladies' and a married ladies' sodality had been formed but there is no record of the Sisters taking over the work of moderators at the meetings at once. (31) However, the Sisters did have a part in introducing the Living Rosary Society at Holy Cross in 1856 and in a few meetings membership reached three hundred. (32) This large number is in proportion to the total number of parishioners at Holy Cross which in 1857 was approximately three thousand. (33)

At Saint Patrick's, the school year 1858-1859 was encouraging for other reasons besides the founding of sodalities. Father Fitzgerald reported that nearly all the children of school age were in attendance (34) and he had secured a Brother Edward, an excellent teacher, for the 188 boys. (35) The Sisters' "schools" had 200 girls. The pecuniary situation was improved also. "I look upon this as an encouraging sign, and acting on it have made arrangements with the Brothers at South Bend for a fourth teacher next year; besides remodelling the school house." (36)

### The Establishment of the Select School

When Sister Mary Gonzaga took up her duties as superior in 1858, she was advised to establish a select day school for girls. Two factors indicated that such a school would be successful: the improvement of business conditions after the Panic of 1857, and the nature of the capital city itself.

In its social life, Columbus was unique among Ohio cities. Before the war made it into a military camp, the capital was a place of attractive homes and quiet shaded streets where the art of living had not been destroyed by the quest of gain. To it came the wit and wisdom of the State, legislators, lawyers, journalists, teachers, farmers, physicians, reformers of every type, to attend the assembly, court, or convention, and in some cases to remain as residents while holding office or practicing their professions. (37)

The Sisters, consequently, planned an academy patterned after the successful school at Sixth Street Convent in Cincinnati. A long, narrow, brick building large enough to serve as a school as well as convent, situated on the northeast corner of Oak and Young Streets, was purchased on the feast of Saint Joseph, 1859, for the sum of \$3,200. (38)

Some time before September, the Sisters moved from their Cleveland Avenue home. (39) Several additional Sisters joined the community since the work at Saint Patrick and Holy Cross was going on as usual. Sister Agnes Mary had charge of the select school, but little is known about the grades taught or ages of the girls enrolled. Attendance at Saint Patrick's fell off so much after the new school opened that Sister Xaveria, who taught the older girls at Saint Patrick's, had only seven in the highest class. (40)

Nevertheless, the numbers attending the select school remained too few to justify its continued existence, when schools in other places needed teachers so badly. So, after two years, the school closed. The Annals mention that some of the pupils became distinguished for piety, intelligence, and refinement; unfortunately, none of their names have been preserved.

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- (1) Nelson L. Bossing, "The History of Educational Legislation in Ohio from 1851 to 1925." Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications, XXXIX (1930), p. 322.
- (2) Eugene H. Roseboom, The Civil War Era 1850-1873, Vol. IV of the History of the State of Ohio, ed. Carl Wittke (6 vols.; Columbus, Ohio; The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1941-1944), p. 187.
- (3) *Ibid.*, p. 186.
- (4) By-Laws and Reports of the Board of Education, 1851-1857 (Columbus: Board of Education, 1857), p. 65.
- (5) Jacob H. Studer, Columbus, Ohio, Its History, Resources, and Progress (Columbus: 1873), pp. 77, 91.
- (6) University of Notre Dame Archives, Fitzgerald to Purcell, May 21, 1858.
- (7) By-Laws and Reports of the Board of Education, 1851-1857 (Columbus: Board of Education, 1857), pp. 33, 35, 40.
- (8) Nineteenth Annual Report of the State Commissioner of Common Schools, Year Ending 1872. (Columbus: Nevins & Myers, 1873), p. 45.
- (9) University of Notre Dame Archives, Borgess to Purcell, Dec. 6, 1852.
- (10) University of Notre Dame Archives, Borgess to Purcell, Aug. 4, 1854. This first Catholic cemetery was located at Mount Vernon and Washington Aves., and was just outside the city limits. Later when the city grew, the dead were removed to Mount Calvary. Aquinas College High School later occupied the grounds.

{11} University of Notre Dame Archives, Borgess to Purcell, Feb. 12, 1856.

{12} University of Notre Dame Archives, Borgess to Purcell, Feb. 21, 1856.

{13} Father Fitzgerald had considerable difficulty straightening out the parish accounts when he became pastor. See Notre Dame Archives, Fitzgerald to Purcell, Oct. 16, 1857; Apr. 28, 1858.

(14) Notre Dame Archives, Meagher to Purcell, Aug. 13, 1857. The mere fact that laymen wrote accusingly to the archbishop offers no proof of guilt. In the following year when grievous accusations were made against Father Borgess by some in his parish, that priest reminded the archbishop that his chief accuser, a man named Weiler, had morally blackened Father Damien Juncker, Father Joseph Young, Father Schonat and others before. Notre Dame Archives, Borgess to Purcell, Apr. 16, 1858.

(15) "Life of Sister Mary Augusta," Memoirs of the Sisters of Notre Dame of Namur, (privately printed for the use of the Sisters), p. 179.

(16) This erroneous account appeared first in the Cincinnati Daily Gazette, Sept. 22, 1857, in the column "correspondence from Columbus." A reprint of the article appeared, by request, three days later in the Columbus paper, The Ohio Statesman. This sinister piece piously sympathized with the parishioners who had refused a change of pastors. "It is natural to suppose an Irish-born priest would be esteemed by some of the flock to be more indulgent on many of the weaknesses to which many are addicted."

{17} Catholic Telegraph and Advocate, Oct. 3, 1857.

{18} University of Notre Dame Archives, Borgess to Purcell, Sept. 24, 1857.

{19} Ibid. Borgess to Purcell, Oct. 1, 1857.

{20} Catholic Telegraph and Advocate, Oct. 10, 1857.

{21} University of Notre Dame Archives, Fitzgerald to Purcell, Oct. 18, 1857.

{22} Ibid.

{23} Ibid, Fitzgerald to Purcell, Oct. 21, 1857.

{24} "Life of Sister Mary Augusta," Memoirs of the Sisters of Notre Dame of Namur, p. 180.

(25) When Father Meagher left in late October, he spent some months in the Pittsburgh diocese, returning at intervals to Columbus. He died three years later, on August 6, 1860, at his last mission, Mendota, Illinois.

{26} University of Notre Dame Archives, Fitzgerald to Purcell, Oct. 16, 1857.

{27} Ibid, Fitzgerald to Purcell, Oct. 26, 1857.

{28} William E. Kappes, History of the First Catholics in Columbus and of Holy Cross Parish, (Unpublished study, 1946), unpage.

{29} University of Notre Dame Archives, Fitzgerald to Purcell, Dec. 28, 1857.

{30} Recollections of Sister Mary Augusta incorporated in Annals. Unpaged notebook.

{31} Kappes, op. cit.

{32} Recollections of Sister Mary Augusta incorporated in Annals. Unpaged notebook.

{33} William T. Martin, History of Franklin County (Columbus: Follett, Foster & Co., 1858), p. 387.

(34) Ohio had no compulsory school attendance law, though it was much discussed about this time. The first operative law was enacted in 1889. In 1857 the average daily attendance in the Ohio schools was 350,000. The average non-attendance, 487,000. Bossing, op. cit. pp. 136-138.

(35) University of Notre Dame Archives, Fitzgerald to Purcell, Oct. 31, 1858.  
(Brothers of the Holy Cross taught at Saint Patrick School from 1858 to 1861.)

{36} Ibid., Fitzgerald to Purcell, July 21, 1859.

{37} Roseboom, op. cit., p. 52.

(38) Franklin County Record of Deeds, Vol. 67, p. 309. This convent was, therefore, just a block south of the present diocesan chancery building. However, at that date, the cathedral and especially the development of the cathedral block, were in the distant future.

(39) From their new convent that September the Sisters would have needed to walk only a block and a half to hear one day a lanky Republican from Illinois give his first Ohio speech on the east terrace of the Capitol. There is no evidence, however, that Lincoln's audience included them. Lee, op.cit., II, 426.

(40) Ellen McMahon, from an unpublished, unpaged Memoir written on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the arrival of the Sisters.

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BLESSED FRANCOIS LAVAL  
FIRST BISHOP OF OHIO TERRITORY BEATIFIED

Can we not say that our first Bishop has been beatified? At least the first Bishop to have jurisdiction over the territory which is now Ohio, including the Diocese of Columbus, was truly His Excellency, the Most Reverend Francois de Montmorency-Laval, duly named Bishop of Quebec by the Holy See in 1674. (1) He was beatified Sunday, June 22, 1980.

Bishop Laval was the son of a French noble family who left the comforts of France to become the first bishop of New France. He landed at Quebec in 1659 and faced the task of organizing the beginnings of the Catholic Church in Canada. He founded the Seminary of Quebec in 1663. In 1674, the diocese of Quebec was established and he was named as its bishop.

The Diocese of Quebec covered most of North America (2) with the exception of the British colonies on the Atlantic coast and the Spanish colonies on the Western coast. The Northwest Territory, of which Ohio was a part, was under French rule at the time.

In addition to seminary training, Bishop Laval founded the School of Arts, Trades and Agriculture of St. Joachim, eight leagues from Quebec.

His concern for the spiritual well-being of the colonists led him to travel throughout his huge diocese working with the colonists and Indians, often energetically fighting with the governors and the traders because of their abuses of Indian people. He died May 6, 1708, and is buried in the chapel of the Seminary in Quebec.

(1) L'Osservatore Romano, English Edition, June 16, 1980.

(2) "Bulletin", Catholic Record Society, Diocese of Columbus, July, 1979, "The Diocese of Columbus, Jurisdiction and Boundaries."

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MT. CALVARY CEMETERY BURIAL RECORDS  
(Continued)

1891 (Cont.)

Hamer, Elizabeth (8), Oct. 21  
Frech, Barbara (2d.), Oct. 21  
Trott, Mary (75), Oct. 3  
Chapman, Mabel Mary (1m.), Oct. 20

Reiber, Therese (43), Oct. 10  
Deibel, Martin (2), Oct. 5  
Mason, Elizabeth (1m.), Oct. 2  
Ebner, Ognatz (4), Nov. 18  
Dotter, John (30), Nov. 22  
Bauman, Joseph B. (11m.), Nov. 24

1891 (Cont.)

Wittman, Mary (5), Nov. 24  
Theis, Georg Philip (3m.), Nov. 17  
Stecher, Mary Magdalena (5), Nov. 29  
Gatterdam, Joseph (10m.), Nov. 17  
Sachs, John Adam (65), Nov. 20  
Unverzagt, Ita (17), Dec. 2  
Himmelsbach, Ottilia (84), Dec. 11  
Stecher, Rudolph (3), Dec. 22  
Vonarx, Elizabeth (88), Dec. 6  
Zettler, John Bernhart (31), Dec. 11  
Merz, Peter (64), Dec. 6  
Wieser, Friedrich (58), Dec. 14  
Shraugisan, Rosa (64), Dec. 9  
Span, Catharina (77), Dec. 1  
Bissig, Lidwina (78), Dec. 17  
Buchnez, John (27), Dec. 17  
Hoi, Franz (92), Dec. 20  
Bauer, Wilhelm (3m.), Dec. 22  
Schwarz, Mary (36), Dec. 23  
Hiessel, Wilhelm (2), Dec. 24

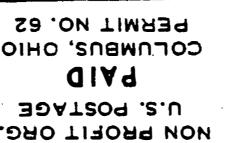
1892

Frech, Cyril (47), Jan. 4  
Beinhalter, Frank (67), Jan. 1  
Lauer, Anna Elizabeth (6m.), Jan. 3  
Steuer, Elizabeth (82), Jan. 6  
Becker, Katharina (57), Jan. 9  
Biordan, Mary (18), Jan. 10  
Thin, Adam (64), Jan. 28  
Trapp, Wilhelm (9m.), Jan. 30  
Frech, Maria (42), Jan. 29  
Weiber, Dominik (83), Feb. 15  
Gleisner, Theckla (63), Feb. 24  
Koch, Katharina Marg. (31), Feb. 19  
Walsh, Harold (2), Feb. 10  
Walsh, Carolina (1y.), Feb. 17  
Oelgoetz, Regina (86), Feb. 17  
Herman, Rosa (2), March 5  
Frey, Marianna (64), March 2  
Betge, Andreas (81), March 30  
Pfeifer, Jakob (67), March 5  
Ury, Theresia (82), March 9  
Carle, Carl (63), March 7  
Lunt, Jakob (57), March 19  
Lukhaupt, Adam (33), March 25  
Kraus, John (32), April 2  
Frick, Julius (23) April 19  
Frison, Joseph (58), April 6

Kaiser, Philip (1d.), April 12  
Zettler, Louise (8), April 25  
Theado, Joseph (25), May 27  
Schauerte, Mary Josephina (10m.), May --.  
Kelle, Alma (19), May 28  
Moeller, Carolina (38), May 15  
Feterer (3m.), May 19  
Kessler, Adam (2), May 1  
Meter, Theresia Mary (2m.), June 11  
Hiermer, Andreas (39), June 2  
Obert, Mary (1d.), June 22  
Bauer, Franziska (29), June 4  
Buekler, Carl (16), June 11  
Reinhart, Andreas (70), July 15  
Studer, Clement (13m.), July 14  
Beuhler, Bernhart (52), July 5  
Herner, John (51), July 30  
Hinterschitt, Magdalnea (31), July 3  
Buehler, Clemens (1y.), July 30  
Brooks, Wilhelm (58), July 23  
Galvin, Abigail (29), July 19  
Triebe, Anna (1d.), July 30  
Goetz, Mary (1d.), Aug. 8  
Doersam, Mary Anna (55), Aug. 15  
Zimmer, Thomas (5m.), Aug. 20  
Zengler, Anna Lena (6d.), Aug. 9  
Bonn, Barbara (67), Aug. 8  
Doberth, Jakob (29), Aug. 22  
Mandabach, Catharina (5), Aug. 1  
Wagner, Child of Mr. (17d.), Aug. 31  
Rink, Joseph (1y.), Sept. 20  
Gerhart, Barbara (3), Sept. 26  
Deibel, Gustav (28), Sept. 25  
Deibel, Margaretha (33), Sept. 13  
Hare, Stanley (37), ASept. 8  
Selig, Michael (74), Sept. 26  
Kesler, Rudolph (21), Sept. 10  
Kiesewetter, Veronica (1y.), Sept. 24  
Schreiner, Heinrich (71). Sept. 12  
Frech, Johannes (60). Sept. 13  
Boehm, Alois (3m.). Sept. 21  
Roll, Catharina (25), Oct. 30  
Rohr, Chlotilda (6), Oct. 20  
Leitinger, Johannes (64), Oct. 1  
Buechner, Catharina (34), Oct. 9  
Yochum, Herman (29), Oct. 8  
Scheiblich, Josephina (62), Oct. 29  
Kreuz, Franz Karl (19), Oct. 12  
Rinle, Charly (2), Oct. 31  
Farischon, Franziska (63), Oct. 2  
Murphy, Margaret (60), Sept. 17

(To be continued)

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CHANCERY OFFICE -  
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