

Communities of the Word

STORIES OF THE CHICAGO PROVINCE



THE CONESUS STORY, 1924 – 1984

Mr. John Morgan



THE BISHOP'S FARM, CONESUS, NEW YORK, 1872–1924

In 1872, Bernard J. McQuaid, the first Catholic bishop of Rochester, New York, purchased the land that eventually became St. Michael's Mission House.¹ The bishop turned the acreage into a vineyard that radiated out from the shores of Hemlock Lake past what would eventually become Mission Road.

Mr. H. Jay Drake speculates that Bishop McQuaid was interested in the property as a personal retreat for himself and his priests as well as an economic source to help fund pastoral activities in a new diocese that did not have adequate resources to support itself.² Father Robert

McNamara even suggests that a small farm would provide financial security in any event.³

Under Bishop McQuaid's direction, the modestly successful farm included livestock, vegetables, and fruit trees but also 80 acres of grapes that workers turned into altar wine of marginal quality. Professors and students at St. Bernard's Seminary in Rochester consumed most of the meat and vegetables grown on the farm. The seminary administration appeared less enthusiastic about "the bishop's farm," as the 527 acres were called, especially after they found out that the bishop willed the farm to St. Bernard's Seminary when he died in 1909.



Workers on the bishop's farm.

REJECTED IN ROCHESTER, 1912

The heritage of each Divine Word establishment in the United States is a testament to the initial forward thinking and generosity of St. Arnold Janssen and his advisors. They seeded the United States with more than 100 capable Sisters, Brothers, and priests in the last years of St. Arnold's life.⁴ This fact is obvious from any early *Catalogus*, where you see the birth location of the first Divine Word missionaries to the United States. Here is the information on the Conesus pioneers from the *Catalogus*:

Member Name	Birth Country	Dates at Conesus
Father August Reissmann	Germany	1924–1925
Father Francis Neuhaus	Germany	1925–1926
Brother Alfred (Charles) Moeller	Germany	1925–1928
Brother Winandus (John) Dockendorf	Germany	1925–1928
Brother Peter (Andreas) Fuchs	Germany	1925–1928
Brother Willibrord (Peter) Beemster	United States (Wisconsin)	1926–1928
Brother Denis (Charles E.) Coney	United States (Illinois)	1926–1928
Father Joseph Gerhards	Germany	1927–1928

The history of Sacred Heart Mission House (in Girard, Pennsylvania) in this volume relates the 1912 adventure of Father Theodore DeLange, provincial superior, wanting to start a second mission house in the eastern United States to prepare young men for the foreign missions. After striking out in several dioceses, Father DeLange met with Thomas Hickey, bishop of Rochester, New York. Father Peter Janser described the visit with the bishop in these words: “His Lordship of Rochester received him most kindly, however, as soon as he came to the point of his visit, it was roughly refused.”⁵

Twelve years would pass before the Divine Word Missionaries and Bishop Hickey would reach an agreement on a location but not on the establishment of a mission house or a seminary. The bishop found that operating the bishop’s farm and winery at Hemlock Lake difficult. He wanted to unload both the farm and the winery onto the Society.

Bishop Hickey had found the continued operation of the farm, and particularly of the winery, an ever increasing burden. The many legal controls imposed by national prohibition (1919–1933) complicated the manufacture of sacramental wine. Furthermore, the vintners had not yet succeeded in correcting the sourness of the “O-Neh-Da” wines. At all events, Bishop Hickey, on May 11, 1925, sold the 527-acre property, the winery, and its stock of wine to the Society of the Divine Word, a well-known order of missionary priests and Brothers.⁶

SVD ASSUMES OWNERSHIP OF THE BISHOP'S FARM, 1924–1934

The Rochester Diocese wanted to rid itself of the bishop's farm, but no group or organization seemed even remotely interested. This quickly changed when Father Joseph Gefell, a diocesan priest, visited seminarians from his parish at Girard and became acquainted with the Divine Word Missionaries. Negotiations started with the diocese and were completed by Father Provincial Peter Janser in a document signed and dated July 31, 1924, by Father Bernard Bonk, the provincial procurator. The same document says that Father August Reissmann was put in charge of the vineyard in the fall of 1924 and that a large number of Divine Word students from Techny worked there that summer.

Later Father Bonk wrote that “the conditions were rather desperate; since the vines in the fields were overgrown by weeds and it took practically two years to rehabilitate a small patch of about 24 acres; the rest was unredeemable.”⁷ The net result was that the Divine Word Missionaries purchased the O-Neh-Da vineyard and the bishop's farm from the Catholic Diocese of Rochester for \$40,000 at what seemed like reasonable interest rates.

However, within a year Father Bonk had renegotiated a new agreement with more favorable terms that included 35,000 gallons of wine, the winery, the vineyard, and the entire farm. The price was still \$40,000, but there was no interest attached to this new agreement.⁸

WHAT DO WE NAME THIS PLACE?

The Divine Word Missionaries called the holy ground or sacred space where they lived, prayed, studied, and died between 1924 and 1984 on Hemlock Lake by a variety of names, starting with St. Bernard's (1924–1936), St. Michael's Mission House (1937–1957), and Divine Word Seminary (1958–1984). In conversation with Divine Word Missionaries, this holy ground was always referred to as “Conesus” primarily because it was physically located in the township of Conesus, New York, even though the property was on Hemlock Lake, not Conesus Lake. Later we discovered some of the lore and legend of how Father Hugo Aubry had a hand in naming the location after St. Michael the Archangel.



Ruins of the bishop's house.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE OF THE FIRST BAND OF BROTHERS, 1924–1928

In 1925 Father Adolf Burgmer assigned Father Francis Neuhaus to replace Father August Reissman as spiritual director of the three Divine Word Brothers, which grew to a group of five Brothers by 1927.⁹

The small community struggled from the beginning, especially due to their lack of knowledge of managing a vineyard and running a winery. There does not seem to have been any concerted effort to train any member of the Society or hire an outsider to direct the operation. The one oversight that appears to have torpedoed the foundation was not to hire a vintner to oversee the wine-making at the beginning, in spite of the fact that there was a New York State agricultural experimentation station and large wine-making operations only a few miles away.

When Father Joseph Gerhards became winery director in 1927, most of the stock of wine purchased from the diocese with the land had spoiled, and his plan to sell unfermented grape juice was never implemented. The foundation that began with great promise in 1924 ended poorly in 1928. An unidentified member later concludes his assessment of the early years as follows: “The first years were fruitless, or rather, a loss.”¹⁰



Bishop McQuaid's original summer residence.

So in July 1928, after three years of operations, there were still no definite plans or even hopes of plans. Father Provincial Burgmer dissolved the community, deciding it was simply beyond the Society's means to make a success of the O-Neh-Da label. Father Bernard Bonk, provincial procurator at Techny, became primarily responsible for the land and the buildings.

Former Divine Word Missionary William Burrows, writing about these early days, offers some sage advice in suggesting that we remember certain other facts behind this first attempt to establish a foundation at Conesus. The story is often not a nice story, but history seldom is, since on its pages are read the day-to-day events of men trying as hard as the men of today to do the right thing, but equally as confused. Several matters were not well known at the time of the purchase, and in light of subsequent events, it is regrettable that they were not grasped.

First, operating a winery would only confuse the mission promotion and vocational efforts of the Society aimed at generating greater mission awareness.

Secondly, the Diocese of Rochester was deeply opposed to religious working in its territory. The Diocese did not, in fact, grant the Society full and normal canonical incorporation; thus, though the Society could operate a winery, it could not openly canvass for members or funds for the foreign missions.



SVDs relaxing on the bishop's veranda.

Thirdly, there was no trained wine-maker available. The Diocese's own operations had been snarled on this thorn, a fact that ought to have raised a red flag and taught the Society a lesson.

Fourthly, the Society of the Divine Word was proposing to harmonize the venture with its missionary training objectives. The Diocese had found this incompatible and its own seminary was in a quite analogous position to the purposes and operations of the Society.¹¹

THE CARETAKER YEARS, 1928–1935

After Father Adolph Burgmer reassigned the confreres in 1928 to other locations, it was up to Father Bonk as procurator (treasurer) to recoup and recover any losses. He hired a caretaker and overseer, Mr. Felix Hadd, recommended by a Chicago diocesan priest. Two years later the farm was in worse shape; Hadd was fired since he appeared more interested in his own welfare and making a fast dollar at the expense of the Society. Most of the farm machinery was sent to Girard or Miramar, suggesting that the Society wanted out of or wanted to dispose of Conesus to any group interested. The Provincial Council was even willing to sell the property at a loss, "but no organization was willing to buy such an isolated plot."¹²



Vineyards on bishop's farm in the 1920s.

In 1929 the U.S. government gave permission to the Society to destroy what wine remained since most of it had already turned to vinegar and could not even be sold for enough money as vinegar to cover transportation costs. This helped the Society to avoid paying taxes on wine that was really vinegar.¹³

The one bright spot was the arrival of the Joseph Iten family as new caretakers. The hard-working and honest Itens took care of the operations and continued to work on the farm long after members of the Society returned to live there. An interesting twist is that Brother Fridolin Iten—architect of the Conesus, Miramar, Girard, and Techny grottoes—was the great uncle of Joseph Iten.

THE DISTILLERY CORPORATION AND FATHERS DANGELMAIER AND FEIGE'S INVOLVEMENT, 1932–1935

In the fall of 1932 a Salesian priest, Father Albert Dangelmaier, contacted Father Bruno Hagspiel, provincial superior, under the guise of buying the Conesus property for \$25,000 and converting it into a home for elderly priests. Even before any agreements were signed, Dangelmaier immediately took over the farm and vineyard to “make improvements.”

By 1934 Father Bonk reported that Father Dangelmaier had contracted almost \$8,000 in debt in the Society's name, which the Society eventually had to pay.

The Society hired another priest-friend of Father Dangelmaier, Father Gregory Feige, who devised a plan to turn the bishop's farm



Brother Fridolin Iten, Joseph and Pauline Iten family.

into a profitable operation. Father Feige convinced the Society that he could turn the disastrous, profitless winery into a multimillion-dollar enterprise that would net the Society of the Divine Word and its investors a return many times over.

Father Feige, with the assistance of the New York Financial and Securities Corporation, reasoned that a distillery rather than a winery would be a more attractive investment opportunity for investors. The Financial and Securities Corporation proposed an Austrian, Dr. Emil Rausch, as the wizard capable of turning the winery into a profitable distillery. With the hope of erasing the losses of the past ten years, the goals of the O-Neh-Da Vineyard and Distillery Inc. in selling shares of stock to the public were “to maintain and operate vineyards and orchard. To ferment, produce and merchandise wines of various kinds. To manufacture and merchandise fruit products and cordials.”¹⁴

Father Feige, Dr. Rausch, and the Financial and Securities Corporation from the beginning deceived the Society about its immediate plans to start distilling brandy and thus produce large profits immediately rather than concentrating on the long term project of rehabilitating the vineyards.

Under the terms of the agreement, the Society signed over the Conesus holdings with the exception of 30 acres. The proposal included selling \$500,000 worth of stock, with the winery and vineyards pledged as collateral. The Society would receive 200,000 shares pegged at \$1 each for its Conesus holding. Father Feige planned to sell the remaining 300,000 shares to the public.

Why was the Society so willing and ready to turn over the vineyards to the proposed distillery corporation? Burrows suggests several reasons:

- Since the farm, especially the vineyards, were unsuccessful and an embarrassment to the Society, the SVD management seemed prepared to try anything that offered hope.
- Perhaps Father Provincial Hagspiel and his council relied too heavily on his procurator, Father Bonk (although Father Charles Michel, also a council member, had misgivings about the distillery corporation from the start).¹⁵

In June 1934 Father Hugo Aubry became provincial after the previous administration had signed off on plans for the distillery corporation. Father Aubry was skeptical of the project and pursued finding out how a farm and vineyard that could not be given away was suddenly collateral for a \$500,000 stock offering.

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) shared Father Aubry's misgivings and sent an investigator to verify the evaluation of the Standard Appraisal Company. The FTC inspector reported that the evaluation was more than twice as high as the property was worth. When Father Bonk and Mr. Welch of the Financial and Securities Corporation met with FTC officials in Washington, DC, they were threatened with gross negligence and bad faith in using an unsubstantiated value for the property.¹⁶

Suddenly it became obvious that the O-Neh-Da Vineyard and Distillery was in trouble. By the time bankruptcy became inevitable, some Provincial Council members initially wanted to let the ship go down. However, the name and reputation of the Society were on the line, so cooler heads agreed to settle the debts and transfer the ownership of the vineyard back to the Society of the Divine Word. All the charges and debts that piled up during the two years—including court and attorney fees, distilling licenses, travel expenses, distillery equipment, cost of incorporation and stock sales, stock buyback, salaries for Father Feige and Dr. Rausch, and so forth—was estimated at \$250,000.¹⁷

At the end of the first decade of Society ownership of the bishop's farm, the Province was left holding the bag containing the vineyard and farm.¹⁸ The Rochester Diocese had not yet granted the Society formal incorporation and permission to work in the diocese. The Provincial

Council decided to play its last remaining card and inform the diocese that if the Society of the Divine Word did not receive permission to open a seminary on the property, the Society would abandon the site.

A NEW CHAPTER, 1935

When Father Provincial Aubry approached the new bishop, Edward Mooney (later the cardinal-archbishop of Detroit), he was much more amenable to the Society's proposal to start a seminary for "belated vocations," men who wanted to become missionaries but had not attended a minor seminary.

Father Aubry visited Bishop Mooney in late June 1935 and followed this visit with a letter on July 27, 1935, petitioning the bishop "to establish a mission house in the Diocese of Rochester: the mission house being thought of as 'a high school of moderate extension.'"¹⁹ Father Aubry provides this insight into the Provincial Council's reasoning for wanting to establish a mission house at the bishop's farm and linking it to the vineyard owned by the Society.



Belated vocations with faculty in 1939.

We have arrived at the conclusion that we must have a complete settlement or rather a mission house in connection with the vineyard. Only in this way will we be able to establish an effective management with proper supervision and eventually have our Brothers working in the vineyard in agreement with their religious vocation.²⁰

Bishop Mooney granted permission, and a school for belated vocations began almost immediately. The year 1936 would mark a new chapter in the history of the seminary and winery at Conesus. Bishop Mooney's letter of August 3, 1935, to Father Provincial Aubry at Techny was encouraging:

In answer to the request submitted in your letter of July 27, I hereby grant permission for the Society of the Divine Word to establish a school for the education of its own candidates on the property overlooking Hemlock Lake, which your Society purchased some years ago from St. Bernard's Seminary. I also take this occasion to express the fervent hope that the establishment of this school for the training of vocations for your Society will result in a noteworthy development of the devoted and zealous work in the cause of the Missions which you are so effectively carrying on at home and abroad.

Such encouragement and praise from the future cardinal of Detroit and friend of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith ended with this frank slap on the wrist regarding the vineyard and O-Neh-Da winery on the property.

May I add that the Diocesan Consultors with whom I discussed this matter expressed the hope that with an established foundation of your Society on this property, the project of development of the vineyard can be carried on without the continuance of the stock selling campaign which Father Feige inaugurated some time ago, and which, to be utterly frank, has made a rather unfavorable impression upon some of our priests because of its appearance of commercialization.²¹



Seminarians and prefects ca. 1940.

Father Robert McNamara, Rochester diocesan historian, describes the return of the Society to the diocese in these words:

In October 1935, the Divine Word Fathers announced their intention of starting a preparatory school for aspirants to their own Order. St. Michael's Divine Word Seminary opened in 1936 with a student body of twenty-five "belated vocations." Several more priests had been added to the staff by then to serve as faculty, and from that year on, these true missionaries have given willing and valuable weekend assistance to the pastors of parishes south of Rochester. The increase of residents on their property also made it possible to cultivate the farm more extensively and to revive the wine-making.²²

The *Rochester Diocesan Catholic Courier* ran a two-column spread titled "New Mission House Opens in Diocese: Divine Word Society Plans to Train Young Men for Missions," with a picture of Father Peter Stoll describing the course of studies and calling attention to the work of the Society in the United States and that two young men from Rochester were already members of the Society.

The course at the Mission House will cover four years after which the students will take the college course of two years at Girard, PA, then two years in the novitiate and six years in a theological seminary.

Four colored priests members of the Society ordained in 1934 are now working in colored parishes in Lafayette, LA. The Society of the Divine Word has two former Rochester young men in the order as ordained priests: Rev. Charles Erb of Holy Family parish and Rev. Bernard LeFrois of St. Boniface parish.²³

SEMINARY DEDICATED TO ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

Records and documents in the Chicago Province Archives are mute about how Conesus was named for St. Michael. However, one tradition says that the name of the seminary came to Father Aubry as he was saying the Divine Office on the feast of St. Michael the Archangel, while traveling on a train to Conesus.

Betty Green, a longtime area resident and the author of a history of Conesus, provides another insight into why the name “St. Michael” became associated with the place that was called in succession the Bishop’s Farm, St. Michael’s Mission House, and finally Divine Word Seminary.

The Mission Road property has been associated with St. Michael since 1875. In that year a new parish was established as a mission of St. Michael’s Church of Livonia Center on land, which the Reverend Bernard J. McQuaid, the first bishop of the Rochester Diocese, had purchased some time earlier as a retreat.²⁴

In 1960 the Most Precious Blood Church of Rochester presented the statue of St. Michael to Divine Word Seminary as a remembrance of a pilgrimage to this site by the St. Anne’s Society. The statue appears much older, perhaps dating back to the nineteenth century. It is unclear where the statue of St. Michael resided before its installation at Divine Word Seminary.

Ms. Green describes how the statue of St. Michael was removed from Divine Word Seminary on May 24, 2003, many years after the Divine Word Missionaries had sold the property and former seminary. Kelly Schultz Antiques of Clarence, New York, purchased the statue and placed it in front of their shop, where it remains to this day.

MORE ABOUT THE RETURN OF THE SOCIETY TO CONESUS

A new group of Divine Word pioneers made up of Father Peter Stoll, Brother Willibrord (Peter) Beemster, and Brother Joachim (Stephen) Oros left St. Francis Xavier Mission House in Miramar, Massachusetts, for Conesus on September 18, 1935. Father Henry E. VanVree, a Dutch missionary to China, welcomed them in Rochester and went with them to the bishop’s farm. As a member of this contingent, Brother Joachim provides the only known systematic documentation



The Statue of St. Michael the Archangel.

of events during the years 1935–1938 in his unofficial history of this period. Brother Joachim starts his narrative with these words:

The next morning Father VanVree appeared again, and taking our baggage we started for the bishop's farm. As we drove along he described the place to us, unintentionally developing a castle in our minds which was soon . . . shattered.²⁵

Brother Joachim goes on to describe the first impressions when the contingent reached their destination after taking several wrong turns: "The roads were in such bad condition. The old barn, the scraps of machinery scattered all about, the dilapidated buildings and finally the bishop's house brought a keen feeling of disappointment."²⁶

He balances his initial assessment with these positive, optimistic words: "The bishop's chapel alone, which remained as the confreres had left it in 1927, was attractive and encouraging. Next we stepped out onto the second floor veranda. There unexcelled beauty cheered our hearts, just as God made it. Peaceful Hemlock Lake with trees of oak and hemlock stretching along its winding shores, it was as the bishop called it, 'paradise.'"²⁷



A view of Hemlock Lake from the vineyard.

The next month was spent making needed repairs and improvements on the buildings in preparation for winter. The plum and pear orchards were heavily laden with fruit waiting to be picked. After setting aside what the community would need, the remaining fruit waiting to be picked was sold for a dollar a bushel. Brother Joachim would assume the duties of cook, which he held for a long time. Brother Willibrord managed the farm. The Iten family arrived in mid-October from Switzerland. Brother Joachim describes the farm in these words:

Our livestock at that time consisted of nine cows, a few heifers, five horses, thirty-five sheep, and a hundred or so chickens. Brother Will had his hands full and day after day he worked from sunrise to sunset. Soon the silo was filled, all the corn and the crops gathered in. Father Rector joined in to help our farm crew. That winter we found it necessary to buy only hay from a nearby farmer.²⁸

Brother Joachim says the Divine Word Missionaries at Conesus were:

tired at the end of each day, we all looked forward to restful and enjoyable evenings. Brother cook [Joachim] would always have something refreshing, while Father Rector Stoll would read us a letter from Father Provincial or tell us of some incoming news.

After meals everyone helped to wash dishes; then came recreation. First we listened to Lowell Thomas, followed by Amos 'n' Andy, after which we played some games, talking over the happenings of the day. Without realizing it we grew fond of our new home since strong family bonds had developed. Our little chapel afforded great consolation to everyone. As in the other houses, we had our regular devotions, though there was no organ to accompany the singing. On Sunday Father Rector gave a sermon to the community, the Iten family and the working men. The Christmas of 1935 was simple, much like the one in Bethlehem. Since there was not much entertainment possible, more time was spent at Our Lord's crib in the chapel. Yet everyone around was happy and pleased with the things we did have.²⁹

REINVIGORATING THE O-NEH-DA WINERY, 1935

When the dust started to settle on the winery at Conesus, Dr. Emile Rausch—hired by the O-Neh-Da Vineyard and Distillery Corporation earlier because of his credentials in the area of liquor making and distilling—was still on the payroll. He welcomed the Society when they returned in September 1935. Brother Ignatius (S. DeSante) from Techny joined the initial group of confreres and, together with Dr. Rausch and other hired help, cultivated the grapes and oversaw the



Conesus Chapel at Christmas in the late 1930s.

1935 pressing, which yielded 1,000 gallons. In spite of this apparent success, Brother Joachim paints another less than optimistic picture of the winery:

At that time the winery consisted of one large room and two smaller ones. All about the property was strewn farm machinery, tools of all types, two hand presses, old barrels and much other discarded equipment. It wasn't a promising sight, one that would make anyone wonder if such were really a winery. On one side were heaps of broken barrels, staves and hoops, while on the other side were the sheep stables.³⁰

In 1936 the grape harvest was bountiful. Brother Ignatius, under Dr. Rausch's guidance and with hired help, pressed the grapes and stored the juice in the fortifying room. Brother Joachim mentions that Brother Ignatius had made rapid progress in the art of wine-making and that responsibility was totally now in his hands. After the harvesting and pressing of the grapes, Dr. Rausch and his colleague, Fred Allen, departed for California.³¹

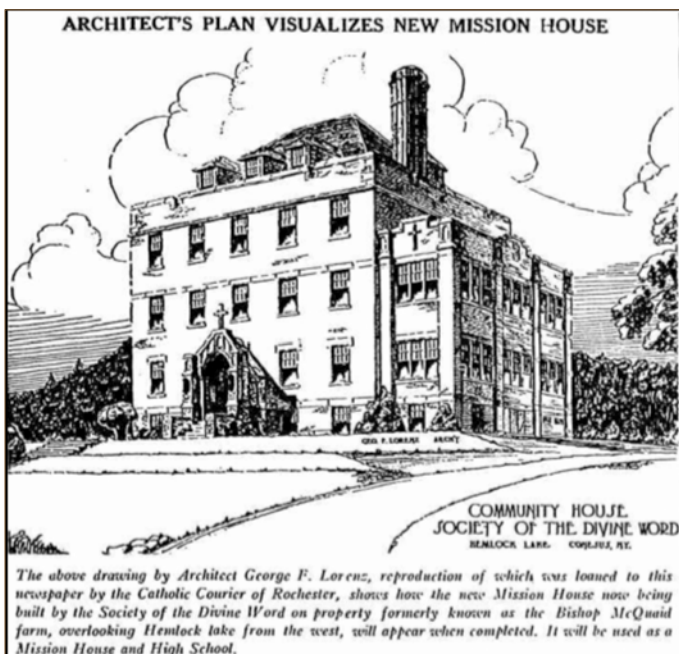
FINDING THE BEST PLACE ON THE PROPERTY TO ERECT ST. MICHAEL'S MISSION HOUSE

Protection from the icy winds of Conesus's winter weather and not a picturesque view of Hemlock Lake and the vineyard appears to be the critical variable used in selecting where to erect the new St. Michael's Mission House.

The Society consulted with architect George F. Lorenz, who provided the illustration and blueprints for the first building that would become St. Michael's Mission House.³² Mr. Lorenz would return as architect to participate in the building of the church in 1947 and the other structures on the property, so that most buildings would conform closely to the original.³³

On the evening of September 6, 1936, the whole community gathered at the new foundation for the blessing of the cornerstone. Brother Joachim lists the participants and what they did:

The group numbered about fifteen, Father Provincial Aubry, Father Lauck, Father Oswald, Brother Fridolin, Brother



Francis Granger, Brother Francis the Trappist, Brother Willibrord, Brother Vincent, Brother Ignatius, Brother Joachim, Leo Goering, John Baker, Dr. Rausch, Fred Allen, and Lawrence Brown. All signed their name to a document, which was then sealed in a container and placed in the cornerstone. Then the customary prayers were offered for God's blessings on this undertaking.³⁴

SEMINARY FOR BELATED OR DELAYED VOCATIONS

The Conesus house journal briefly provides details on the arrival of the first students and their living arrangements, list of seminary faculty, Brothers, and number of students. Here are some succinct items from 1936 and 1937:

First students entered October 1936. They went to school at the white house (one-fourth mile south of present building) and slept at the bishop's house (below the winery and Goering's residence).

* * *

In November 1937 students move into new community building. Members of the faculty are: Fathers Deppe,

Thunich, Hafner (prefect of boys), Sieber and Rabe. Brothers are Fridolin, Francis Ganger, Willibrord, Herman, Corsinus, Joachim, Ignatius, Conrad and Xavier.

* * *

Students, fourteen. Father Joseph Gunning and Father Albert St. Pierre, first two priests ordained from St. Michael's.³⁵

The last comment above about Father Gunning and Father St. Pierre was added later into the house journal since both of these missionaries were two of the first belated vocations to the Society of Divine Word in the United States.

Brother Joachim describes how 1936 ended with a silver jubilee of one of the Brothers and a festive Christmas celebration at Conesus:

December the eighth was not only the great feast of Our Lady but also the Silver Jubilee of Brother Francis Granger. Everyone was deeply impressed seeing him at the altar renewing his vows to Christ. The Christmas season was a happy one. As is customary in all Mission houses, the chapel, dining rooms, and hallways were decorated as best we could. Early Christmas morning the procession went to the dining room where the Infant lay. All participated, Brothers, students, the Iten family and the hired men. Father Oswald celebrated the services; the two other priests were on supply in Avon and East Bloomfield.

After a few prayers before the crib, the Infant was carried through the decorated hallways, resounding with Christmas carols, to the chapel upstairs. Father sang a High Mass, preached a sermon and after Mass he left for Wayland to celebrate another Mass. During the day plenty of music was heard and games of all sorts were played. A few times during vacation, bunko was enjoyed by all, even the hired help.³⁶

The first school year ended in June 1937, and before the seminarians departed they visited Niagara Falls and Our Lady of Victory Shrine in Buffalo. Work on the new building where the plastering and flooring was nearly completed picked up speed when Father Anthony Deppe, the new rector, arrived in August. Six seminarians returned in early



The community dining room.

September to welcome thirteen new seminarians a week later. On the feast of St. Michael, September 29, 1937, Father Provincial Hugo Aubry and the community dedicated the new seminary to St. Michael the Archangel. The Conesus house journal depended on the rector or his representative to record events so we would expect that coverage is sometimes uneven over the 60 years at St. Michael's. However, there are moments when the correspondent provides a human picture of what was happening in the community. Here are a few slices of reality from 1939 to 1940:

February 12, 1939. One bad storm. About 8 inches of snow and many deep drifts. Much snow during the month hindered Brother Ignatius in his weekly trips to Rochester. He had to be pulled out a few times and also dug out by the students a couple of times. High winds keep the community awake a few nights. Fathers have a hard time to go on supply but like it. Real missionary conditions in regard to traveling.

* * *

Students help to supply wood for boiler. Coal is expensive! They keep in good condition physically by this work. Main recreation during wintry months is Ping-Pong. Francis Hrabley is the nemesis of all at this sport. New students arrive making grand total of 23.

* * *

January 31, 1940. Ken O'Dea, Giants' catcher, came from his home in Avon to St. Michael's. Father Dooley invited him to address the students. He proved to be a very entertaining speaker. Answered all questions.

* * *

May 18, 1940. First graduation. Joseph Gunning, Francis Hrabley, Charles Magee, Albert St. Pierre. Solemn H. Mass at 8:30. Father Magee of Livonia Center gave a splendid sermon. Dinner at 11:15. Departure.

When the seminarians moved to the new building in the fall of 1937 and as the community grew, Father Deppe arranged for Sisters of St. Francis from Vienna, Austria, to provide cooking and laundry services for the community. The Sisters arrived in January 1938 after the white house on the property was renovated into a convent suitable for the nuns. Three years later in 1941, a new convent was built on the hill behind the seminarians' and novices' quarters.

Year	Priests	Brothers	Students	Total
1936	1	6	0	7
1937	3	9	7	19
1938	5	9	14	28
1939	7	10	24	41
1940	9	10	30	49
1941	10	9	35	54

These dedicated Franciscan Sisters would serve the St. Michael's community for more than 20 years, after which Italian Sisters, the Daughters of St. Mary of Leuca, replaced them showering the same apostolic devotion on the priests, Brothers, and students.

The SVD community grew during the next six years as the *Catalogus* shows, so that by the time World War II started, there were 54 members and members in training for the Divine Word Missionaries at Conesus.³⁷

In 1937 Brother Fridolin and Brother Vincent finished a new bridge near the mission house, replacing the existing one by removing

a sharp curve in the road. Probably one of the most significant artistic expressions at St. Michael's as well as at Techny, Girard, and Miramar were the grottoes that Brother Fridolin built depicting the mysteries of the rosary. After joining the Society of the Divine Word in Steyl, Holland, in 1893, Brother Fridolin studied at the Academy of Arts in Düsseldorf, Germany.

While at St. Michael's Brother Fridolin completed his largest grotto "The Grotto of the Agony" dominated by an impressive scene in the Garden of Gethsemane. Close by were two other grottoes, one depicting the mysteries of the rosary and the second in honor of Our Lady of Lourdes.³⁸

Many Brothers, priests and students as well as pilgrims found peace and solace visiting these grottoes and meditating on the life of Jesus and his mother.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT, 1940–1960

The year 1944 saw the erection of the modern farm buildings. The construction of the seminary chapel was begun in 1946, and so, by that year, St. Michael's Mission House had acquired over half of its structures. During these years the winery had also been modernized with up-to-date machinery.



Nativity Grotto of Brother Fridolin.

Keeping pace with the construction of the various buildings the Society repurposed the mission and functions many times during its sixty-year history at St. Michael's. Missionary training was happening at Conesus during this period in a big way between 1937 and 1969.³⁹

The summarized *Catalogus* data shows that, after 1969, none of the traditional training of SVD missionaries took place at Conesus. The priests and Brothers in residence at Conesus continued their missionary work in apostolates that were no longer directed primarily at the training of candidates for missionary careers. This freedom gave them opportunities to focus on creative ways to use their talents and charisms along with the buildings and location to provide a place for new ministries.

PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION OF MISSIONARY BROTHERS

Divine Word Missionary Brothers were first assigned to Conesus in 1924 to work in and manage the vineyard and operate the winery and farm as well as to supervise the lay workforce.

After the Brothers returned in 1935 they resumed these roles and later took on the critical roles of training the next generation of Brothers in sales and marketing of sacramental and table wine, accounting, bookkeeping, office management, construction management, building maintenance, wine-making, horticulture, and other vocational skills, such as automotive technology, machinery maintenance, tailoring, electrical engineering, plumbing, and so on.

When the Belated Vocations Program for seminarians moved to Bordentown in 1947, Conesus became a novitiate and high school for young men wanting to become missionary Brothers. The training of Brothers as missionaries began in earnest with the opening of the Brother-candidate high school and Brothers' novitiate in 1947. The high school was a pipeline into the Brothers' postulancy and novitiate program. The largest number of Brother candidates occurred in 1961 when there were 61 students; there were 30 first- and second-year Brother novices in 1967. These programs were closed in 1968 and 1969, respectively.

Mr. Ernest Brandewie says that St. Arnold Janssen's vision of the Divine Word Missionary Brothers during the early days at most North American mission houses was not implemented as faithfully as it was in Europe and elsewhere. Mr. Brandewie continues his description about

the life and work of the Techny Brothers that closely resembles the experience of Brothers at Conesus as well, and suggests the unanticipated consequence of making the Brothers responsible for so many mission house functions. Mr. Brandewie writes,

From the beginning the Founder expected the best from his Brothers and gave them the best opportunities and machinery available to attain their goals. Moreover, the Founder respected and trusted the Brothers.

. . . Because of the Brothers, Techny (read Conesus) was as self-sufficient as possible, like the monasteries of old. Brothers grew and produced whatever was needed to feed the community: wheat, potatoes, and other vegetables, and fruit. They kept cows for milk, butter, and meat, and kept chickens for meat and eggs. . . . Brothers tailored the clothes, and both made and repaired shoes. Anything that could be grown, made, repaired, or produced by the members themselves in isolation from the surrounding world was done. It bred a sense of self-reliance and frugality, and thus . . . was considered an ideal place to prepare young men for the missionary brotherhood.

At the risk of making this section sound overly negative, still another fact must be brought to the fore. The needs of Techny and the rest of the North American houses were so pressing that it was rare for a Brother to be sent to the missions. The Generalate or a mission provincial might ask for Brothers, but U.S. provincials and rectors were loath to release them. Thus a far smaller percentage of Brothers than priests went overseas.⁴⁰

BROTHER JAMES FROM TOGO TO CONESUS AND ON TO GHANA, 1959–2012

However, there were young men who became SVD Brothers and received mission assignments outside the United States. Brother James (Maurice) Djadoo is an example and provides a fascinating twist. The *Livonia Gazette* provides these details:



Brother James (Maurice) Djadoo.

Brother James M. Djadoo, SVD, who began his training and novitiate at Divine Word Seminary recently received the Mission Cross from Provincial Very Rev. Raymond Weisenberger. For many of the Brother novices and seminarians it was the first time they witnessed a departure ceremony for a missionary.

But there is another first. Here was a missionary being commissioned to his own homeland. Maurice Djadoo came from the city of Lome, Togo, West Africa, where Divine Word Missionaries began mission work in 1892 when his grandparents were children. When Maurice finished school he approached Most Rev. Joseph Bowers, SVD, Bishop of Accra, Ghana and shared his desire of becoming a Brother like the devoted Brothers who had built up the Togo mission and manned the printing presses and other shops there.

While training at Conesus Brother James turned his efforts to learn as much as possible about bookkeeping and office work so that he might be able to follow the example that inspired him. He also benefited from a number of other courses and experiences knowing that a Brother is called upon to help in the missions in many varied ways.⁴¹



Some of the Brothers of Conesus.

Fast-forward to 2008, almost 50 years after Brother James took his vows, received his mission cross at Conesus, and departed as a missionary to Ghana. Father Provincial Thomas D'Mello of the Ghana Province writes about it in his newsletter, and both Brother James and his original sponsor, Bishop Joseph Bowers, are mentioned on the same page.

The Golden Jubilee of Brother James Djadoo was celebrated with appropriate splendor and festivities here and abroad (Togo). He is the first African Confrere to celebrate 50 years as an SVD. Congratulations Brother James!

We also rejoice with Bishop Bowers who received an award recently. Bishop Bowers received the "Sisserou Award of Honour" for Meritorious Service from the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica.⁴²

ACTIVITIES AT ST. MICHAEL'S

There were different academic and training programs at Conesus depending on whether you were preparing for the missions as an SVD Brother or priest. However, seminarians and those in the Brothers' formation program both participated in similar sports and household maintenance and service work.

Both groups played ice hockey, baseball, basketball, handball, and so on. They hiked, skied, swam, and fished. In addition, all worked at harvest time in the vineyards, pitched in on the farm, worked in the kitchen supporting the nuns, served food in the refectories, and maintained the overall cleanliness of their own living spaces.

Usually novices did not fraternize or mix regularly with the members in vows, nor did the seminarians in vows mix with the Brothers in vows. Again, there were many exceptions when members intermingled, such as liturgical feasts and Family Feast, when departments played one another in intramural games. On other occasions, members were part of external leagues and played their counterparts at seminaries and colleges in the area.

Organizations such as the Catholic Students' Mission Crusade (CSMC) and mission study groups as well as visiting missionaries on home leave helped keep the focus of everyone, not only those in training, on the ultimate goal all were preparing for—bringing the Good News to all nations and societies. Mission Days, when the community welcomed people from the Rochester area to learn about what the Society of the Divine Word was doing worldwide, and organized events for international college students and parish sodalities and organizations filled many Sundays at St. Michael's.

At one time the novices at Conesus had a presidium of the Legion of Mary that was the only seminary presidium in the United States. Seminarians and Brothers helped vocation directors with retreats for young men discerning whether they had a calling to missionary life.⁴³ They also taught religious education to teenagers at a few local parishes and helped out in parishes at major holy days.

Music and drama rounded out a busy schedule for members as they participated not only in liturgical polyphonic music but also in Broadway musical and other theater plays for the community. Excursions to places and events in the Finger Lake area of New York State were frequent and memorable. Students' horizons expanded by visits to places such as the Corning Glass Center and the Steuben factory;⁴⁴ the Trappist Abbey of the Genesee at Piffard, New York; and plays, films, and seminars at Nazareth and St. John Fisher colleges.



High-flying recreation.

PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION OF MISSIONARIES

The year 1950 saw the arrival of 41 first-year novices at Conesus and the start of a clerical novitiate. This was followed in 1955 with a junior college when the New York State Board of Regents granted a provisional charter to Divine Word Seminary as a junior college.

The largest combined class of first- and second-year clerical novices was 81 in 1951, and the largest combined class of clerical college students was 55 in 1958. Overall, the year 1957 saw 214 men living, studying, and working together, the largest group at Conesus in its 62-year history. These were either professed missionaries of the Society (Brothers or priests) or were in preparation to become members (Brothers or priests) of the Divine Word Missionaries.

In 1956–1958, to accommodate the increase in the number of novices and college students, the Society erected a new four-story college and novitiate building that mirrored the building on the left of the chapel. With this new structure, major construction at Conesus was finished. The *Livonia Gazette* described the dedication as follows:

His Excellency, Bishop James E. Kearney, D.D., will bless the new Clerical Novitiate and Junior College of Divine Word Missionaries at Conesus on Monday, June 17, 1957, at 11 am. The addition, designed by George F. Lorenz and built by Joseph Kirchner, both of Rochester, is connected with the temporary church and Brothers' School. It includes classrooms, library, dormitories, dining halls, recreation rooms and a combination gymnasium/auditorium.⁴⁵

Father Casimir Murawski, rector, provided the "State of St. Michael's Mission House" in his 1957 midyear report to the Provincial Chapter. Here are a few items from his snapshot:

This report is a story of spiritual, material achievement and moral encouragement. God has blessed the humble efforts of superiors and subjects alike beyond the expectations of even the most optimistic. We have at Conesus the following members and departments: 15 Fathers, 15 Brothers, 59 Junior professed, 60 Clerical Novices, 14 Brother Novices, 9 Brother Postulants and 25 Brother Candidates. Together with 8 nuns who staff our kitchen and laundry, the community numbers 205 members.

Father Murawski then provides a short summary of the status of each department.

The Fathers—Great credit for the high spiritual and intellectual atmosphere at Conesus must be given to the devoted and hard-working priests. They are an inspiration and a source of genuine joy to the younger members and the aspirants of the Society. To me personally they are faithful cooperators in the manifold tasks of our variegated institution.

The Brothers—The professed Brothers no less contribute generously and effectively to the high pitch of religious and missionary fervor as well as to the material prosperity of the Seminary. Under the superb guidance and leadership of the



Working in the vineyard of the Lord?

veteran Father Augustine Loechte they go about their daily duties with excellent supernatural motivation.

The Junior Professed—Also demonstrate the fine traits of happy and striving religious. We are much pleased with their conduct, especially when we think of the sad situation that prevailed in the Western Juniorate. In the two years of operation we have lost only one Frater. Scholastically, they are making the necessary progress as required by an accredited Junior College of New York State.

The Clerical Novices—Are also living up to the demands of our Constitutions and the aims of our Society. They try to measure up to the high ideals of a missionary and religious. (Father Wagner will present a more detailed report.)

The Brother Novices and Postulants—Are ably directed by Father Morman. They strive to prepare themselves for the tasks, which are peculiar to their particular vocation. They show good promise of spiritual and material profit to our Society. (Father Morman will present a more detailed report.)

The Candidates—We are, furthermore, satisfied with the training and conduct of our Brother Candidates. So far we can point to several excellent young professed Brothers who are the fruits of this school. We have one problem, and that is, that the candidates do not have formal classes in the afternoon. With the help of another priest we would like to introduce afternoon class periods, at least, for the two lower classes.

The Financial Situation—Is vigorous, but needs constant attention and diligent practice of economy. I almost think that we witness a daily multiplication of loaves when I observe how the good Lord provides food, clothing and shelter for 205 young, strong, growing men. We manage to meet our current expenses but fail in the payment of interest due to the Province. We have indebtedness to the Province of \$1,300,000, most of which represents the erection of new buildings in the past ten years. Our investments amount to \$442,000, most of which rests in our O-Neh-Da winery. Moreover, we enjoy a trust fund of \$102,000.

The current expenses for the year 1957 will reach the high of \$93,000. These include: \$39,000 nutrition, \$6,000 clothing, \$15,000 household (fuel, electricity, janitor, infirmary), \$3,000 workshops, \$6,000 church and school, \$14,000 dues (insurance, loans, generalate) and \$10,000 general expenses (repairs, garage, buildings).

These current expenses we shall meet with the following income: \$9,000 Mass stipends, \$10,000 clergy supply, \$25,000 winery, \$15,000 raffle of a car, \$10,000 special drives (Christmas, Poor Souls, Mother's Day), \$8,000 tuition, \$2,000 grottos and gift shop, \$5,000 donations and \$2,000 bequests.

The Farm Program—Our farm program is a stable one. Already it has proven its importance and value in providing meat, butter and milk for our large community. And it shows promise of greater productivity and more substantial saving

in the future. For your interest I may mention that our farm boasts of 80 beef cattle, 60 dairy cattle and 130 hogs. Last year our mission abattoir or butcher shop processed more than 25,000 pounds of meat, slaughtered 32 beef cattle, 74 hogs, 6 calves and 250 chickens.

The Winery—Is a source of a modest income, much joy and many headaches. Most of our customers are contented and happy to help in our mission cause. But at times we fail to deliver to them stable wines. We believe that the fault lies with our wine maker. But we are taking steps to remedy the situation. Brother Stanislaus is taking substantial interest in the analysis, chemical aspects and actual production of wines. We hope his studies will provide the necessary information. I may remark here that as of January 1, 1956 we have discontinued the production of table wines and have restricted ourselves to the making of only sacramental wines. And this has worked out to our advantage and to the benefit of the priests who purchase our altar wines.⁴⁶

Six months later in December 1957 Father Murawski updated his report to the Provincial Chapter with a personal plea for approval of an elevator at Conesus and concluded with an upbeat summary.

There is one practical observation and request I would like to make at this time, and it is this. St. Michael's has a definite and urgent need for an ELEVATOR. It should not be considered a luxury, but rather a necessity. Old and sick men like Father Aubry 86, Father Loechte 77, Brother Aloysius 70, and Brother Francis 71, exert themselves too strenuously in climbing three and four flights of floors. It is to be regretted that the elevator was not installed at the time the shaft was erected in 1950. The price would have been much lower then.

Once more, we can be grateful to God for having blessed St. Michael's so abundantly in every respect, especially, in the fine quality of priests and Brothers, who are splendid examples to all those receiving their training in the Juniorate, Clerical and Brother Novitiates and Brother candidates' School.⁴⁷

Within five years another dramatic change occurred at St. Michael's Mission House: the transition from a junior to a senior college. On March 1, 1961, the Divine Word Seminary Board of Trustees, comprising Fathers Paul Burrichter, James Mullaley, Charles Schoderbeck, Joseph Fleishaker, Thomas Leibold, and Harry Felski, unanimously adopted a resolution to relocate the junior and senior years of college and to seek a charter as a senior college from the New York State Board of Regents. The SVD Board of Trustees included these and other details in their application:

The purpose is to establish and maintain an institution of higher education at the college level and to conduct courses of study leading to the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree, in order to train young men for the Roman Catholic priesthood.

The proposed changes will include a two-year novitiate and the last two years of college. In the second year of novitiate the seminarians will start their Junior year of college. The educational program will be a liberal arts college program and only students from Miramar and Epworth after 1962 who meet specific standards will be accepted. Conesus graduates matriculate to Techny, IL, Bay St. Louis, MS, Europe and South America for theological studies.⁴⁸

The New York State Board of Regents granted St. Michael's tentative approval, but the assessment by the accrediting agency soon made it apparent that by 1965 Conesus could not afford being a senior college; the college students were moved to Epworth.

“THE LEGEND” CELEBRATES SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF ORDINATION, 1966

Through all the years of turmoil and change, Father Hugo Aubry still held on to the hope of replacing the “temporary chapel” at Conesus with a cathedral-like sanctuary dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel that would attract thousands of pilgrims and encourage the growth of the St. Michael's Mission League. The passage of time and events beyond anyone's control made a larger church unlikely and eventually impossible.

Father Aubry joined the Divine Word Missionaries at Steyl and received his first assignment and mission cross from St. Arnold Janssen himself. As an administrator, Father Aubry held most of the important managerial positions at some time during his career. One local newspaper lauds Father Aubry with these words:

Alert and active at 94, Father Aubry is known to many of the visitors who come to the seminary here and who see him on his brisk daily walk, still a part of his schedule. To the members at the seminary he is practically a legend, with his years of experience reaching back almost to the founding of the Divine Word Missionaries.

In 1934 Father Aubry was appointed Provincial Superior of the American Province, putting him in charge of all the work of Divine Word Missionaries in the United States. After six years as Provincial Superior, Father Aubry became Rector of Divine Word Seminary, Conesus, in 1940. His years of service as superior of the seminary were followed by several years as director of the O-Neh-Da Vineyard and Winery, operated by the seminary.

In recent years Father Aubry has spent an “active Retirement” at Divine Word Seminary, Conesus. An eye operation in 1963 restored his failing sight sufficiently so that he could once again read books and papers. Until a year ago he was still directing the League of St. Michael, a spiritual organization he originated. Presently, he is compiling a history of the seminary here.⁴⁹

AFTER THE SEMINARIANS AND BROTHERS IN TRAINING RELOCATED, 1970–1984

By 1970 when the Brother novices left Conesus, there were only 19 members of the Society at St. Michael’s Mission House—15 Brothers and four priests. During the next 14 years the number of members at St. Michael’s Mission House remained relatively constant; only the ratio of priests to Brothers had changed, as did the average age of the community, so that in 1983 there were 12 SVDs—seven priests and

five Brothers. In 1984 there were four priests and two brothers when the SVD left and lowered the flag at Conesus, never to return.

Father Robert Hunter, writing to friends after he was assigned as rector in October 1969, outlined his mission:

The location of Conesus lies some thirty miles south of the city of Rochester. The Divine Word Seminary is on the west bank [side] of Hemlock Lake, one of the many beautiful Finger Lakes of western New York. Hemlock Lake is restricted since it is the source of water supply for the city of Rochester.

The Divine Word Seminary for many years was the formation center for priests and brothers of the Society. Those programs have been transferred to other locations. For this reason, the purpose and property is under intense study for possible conversion to other projects, new development or sale. This is the reason why the post of administrator is temporary and intended to guide the institution through the transitional stage. Sixteen Brothers make up the community. The O-Neh-Da Vineyards and winery for the manufacture of sacramental wine are part of the operation.⁵⁰

From Father Hunter's second paragraph above he clearly sees his role at Conesus as short term as he attempts to repurpose or sell St. Michael's Mission House.

PROPOSED BUSINESS OFFER FOR REST AND CONVALESCENT HOME, 1970

A month later, on November 26, 1969, Father Donald Ehr, superior of the Eastern Province, released a news bulletin stating that the Conesus seminary would be sold.

For Immediate Release: Divine Word Seminary in Conesus, New York to be purchased for rest and convalescent home. Washington, D.C.—Divine Word Seminary (St. Michael's Mission) will be purchased by a prominent Rochester businessman and associates for a proposed rest and conva-

lescent home, the Very Rev. Donald J. Ehr, SVD, announced today. The purchase offer, which was signed last week, will take effect in summer of 1970. It was through the efforts of the Lanny Terry Realty Co., Father Ehr said, that the idea of converting the extensive buildings and other facilities of St. Michael's into a rest and convalescent home became a realistic possibility.

Although all the holdings of the Society at Conesus are included in the present purchase offer, Father Ehr further announced that the O-Neh-Da Winery and Vineyard will continue to be operated under the supervision and with the approval of the Society, in the same manner as it has been over the years.⁵¹

Father Ehr then provides an excellent short update and snapshot of what had happened recently to the formation and training programs that St. Michael's hosted from 1935 through 1970.

Divine Word Seminary (St. Michael's Mission) for more than thirty years has been a formation and training center (including high school, college, and novitiate programs) for young men preparing for missionary service overseas as priests and Brothers.

During the past ten years, the Society of the Divine Word has gradually been centralizing these programs in other parts of the United States. The Society's four-year College is now located at Epworth, Iowa. The Society's central Novitiate is now in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. In September 1968, the high school at Conesus for aspirants to the Brotherhood was merged with the Society's high school program in Erie, Pa., and this past summer the Brothers' Novitiate at Conesus was closed temporarily in order to give those entering this program several years of college or work experience first. For all these reasons, Divine Word Seminary in Conesus has been in a transitional stage for some years.⁵²

Father Ehr also forwarded a copy of the press release to Bishop Joseph Hogan and Rev. James Moynihan in the Rochester Diocese Chancery Office to apprise diocesan officials of the potential change. Several years earlier, Ehr reminds Moynihan, the Society of the Divine Word had negotiated the sale of Conesus with Xerox, but this time he was optimistic about the outcome:

Several years ago, you may remember, we were negotiating with Xerox, Inc. and at that time obtained the permission of Archbishop Sheen for the disposal of the property, along with permission from the Holy See to alienate our holdings there.

The present purchase offer looks very promising and I anticipate that it will go through. Hence, we will be concerned about re-locating to some other area of Rochester and possibly entering into some activity or apostolate that will be beneficial to the Diocese of Rochester and our missionary purposes.⁵³

Several weeks later Father Hunter told the *Rochester Courier-Journal* during an interview that the seminary complex now houses two priests and 14 Brothers. He also reported that the Livonia School District uses the school building as an elementary school.⁵⁴

The hope that infused Father Ehr's press release and letters to Rochester diocesan officials at Thanksgiving week 1969 turned sour in early spring of 1970 when Father Ehr informed Bishop Hogan that Conesus would not be sold:

In a letter of November 28, 1969, I informed you of a signed purchase offer for the property of the Society of the Divine Word at Conesus, New York. At that time, it was expected that this purchase offer would become final in March, 1970, and the actual transfer of property would be effected this July 1970.

However, once again negotiations have broken down and the purchase offer was withdrawn several weeks ago. At the moment, we have no other strong or promising leads on the

sale or use of the extensive facilities at Conesus.

It would seem to me now that as long as we are undecided as to the future of the Mission House at Conesus, we cannot take on any new activities in the diocese, or move to a new location. Hence, I would ask you not to count on the Society taking any inner city apostolate for the coming year.

Finally, should the Diocese of Rochester through its numerous agencies be in any way in need of a facility such as we have at Conesus, or know of anyone who would be willing or interested to enter into discussion about the possible uses of such a facility, I would be very happy to hear of it and follow up on it.⁵⁵

CREATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

During the 1970s province administrators along with priests and Brothers at St. Michael's sought other creative ways to repurpose St. Michael's into a valuable resource for the larger community. Some of the events and activities that happened during the next 15 years at Conesus included the following ventures and enterprises.

In the spring of 1973, Rochester lawyers Kennedy & Ryan were advising the Divine Word Missionaries about perceived sale opportunities:

It is still my opinion that the greatest potential sale of the property lies in the purchase by some union organization for the benefit of its members or by some company which is non-unionized for the benefits of its employees. Enclose [*sic*] herewith is a copy of a letter I am directing to a local broker who, for many years past, has acted on behalf of Eastman Kodak Company in the acquisition of properties.⁵⁶

Lawyer Kennedy's letter to the broker concludes with these recommendations for Conesus:

The Order has had some studies made as to the potential uses of the property, and one of the thoughts which occurred to me was the possibility of some company like Kodak acquiring it for the establishment of a camping grounds and use of the buildings for its employees through the KPAA. Another

alternative proposal would involve a sale to the automobile unions which would permit a use by union members from Rochester Products, Chrysler in Syracuse, etc. or another possibility might be something by way of use by employees of IBM.⁵⁷

ST. MICHAEL'S AGRICULTURAL FARM FOR BOYS, 1973

Under the banner heading—"St. Michael's Seminary Sold. Will Be Farm for Young Drug Offenders," the *Livonia Gazette* described that an interdenominational religious group called the Benedictine Brothers of Our Lady of Perpetual Help had agreed to purchase the buildings and lands for use as a residential school and drug prevention program.

The Benedictine Brothers will move their Rochester headquarters to the school renamed St. Michael's Agricultural Farm for Boys. Brother Joachim, community president, envisions the farm as an alternative to jail for young offenders under the state's new tough anti-drug laws.⁵⁸

Again at the eleventh hour the purchase agreement and plans between the Society and the Benedictine Brothers of Our Lady of Perpetual Help did not materialize, with the result that the Society redoubled its efforts to serve and support the Rochester community.

NEW FORM OF MINISTRY TO SERVE THE CHURCH, 1974–1984

Father Robert Hunter in January 1974 updated Bishop Hogan of Rochester in a letter:

We have entertained many proposals of sale or lease but none of them seemed to be the right solution to our present problem. Fortunately the O-Neh-Da Winery now leased to the Barry Wine Company under the management of Mr. Albert B. Cribari has been our sustaining income and subsidy so that the present priests and Brother have a good community life.



Aerial view of St. Michael Mission.

We are always beset with the secret little thought that maybe we shall sometime in the future be again looking for just such a place, so that we think the time has come for us to set up some form of ministry in the service of the Church. With some remodeling of the school building, and the refurbishing of the grottos and shrine, we think we can make a real contribution to the religious, educational and liturgical aims of the Holy Year with its mission theme of Evangelization.⁵⁹

Father Hunter in the same letter mentions that Father Richard Thibeau is joining St. Michael's and provides a detailed list of events and activities that will promote the goal of evangelization. Father Hunter's plan consisted of these elements—Proposed Mission Center, Revenue Producing Elements, Specific Purposes and Additional Advantages. He also provides a price tag of \$25,000 mainly to rehab and make 25 double-occupancy rooms with bath facilities available for the retreats, workshops, and meetings. Here is a short summary of his thoughts:

Even with limited personnel and means, we can make a modest beginning with the Mission Center. After detailed observation, thought and inquiry, a mission center is feasible,

timely, needed and workable at this time. These elements need to be accomplished during summer 1974: Shrine and liturgy program from May 1 to November 30, souvenir shop capable of attracting up to five thousand yearly visitors, cafeteria available, wine tasting facility, summer picnics and bazaars, facilities for retreats, workshops and meetings.

Providing our facilities would serve the needs of the area and the Mission Center. So many groups have begged us to open our house to their needs at an affordable price. In almost all cases they provide their own speakers, directors and retreat masters. Interested groups are diocesan marriage counseling organizations that promise twenty weekends per year, the *Cursillo* movement, campus ministry chaplains, parish retreats, etc. Charismatic, family counseling, ecumenical, and business groups have also approached us. Even wedding parties have expressed interest in renting our facilities.⁶⁰

With an exception of three years (1975–1977) when Father Paul Burrichter returned as *praeses*, Father Thibeau would manage the SVD community at St. Michael's for the next seven years until the Divine Word Missionaries left in 1984.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

The *Rochester Courier-Journal* and the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* as well as most of the local newspapers, including the *Livonia Gazette* and the *Lima Recorder*, heralded the new sense of energy, enthusiasm, and vitality that emanated from St. Michael's Mission House on Hemlock Lake.

The *Courier-Journal* carried a full two-page spread with 12 photographs on the history, purpose, and current restoration of the Rosary Grottoes. Father Paul Thunich and the other Brothers and priests were featured taking “great pride in the work they’re doing to restore the grottoes and hope that they will again become a source of spiritual enlightenment for those who visit them.”⁶¹

Later the *Courier-Journal* carried another full-page spread with five photos showing Brother Francis at work in the office, Brother Anthony gardening, Father Hunter studying, Father Thibeau using

his carving skills to make wooden figures for mission displays, and Brother Matthew removing piping-hot food from the oven. The article mentions that although the O-Neh-Da Winery is not under the Society's direction, Brother Joachim and Brother Patrick still work for it, delivering wine and taking orders. In addition to those members in the photos, the article talks about Father Thunich's work in the grottoes, Brother Joseph caring for the farm, Brother Bernard handling inside maintenance, Brother Aloysius lending a hand wherever he is needed, and Brother Ralph remodeling rooms for retreatants.

Optimism exudes from the pictures, accompanying text, and title, which announces a "New Day Dawning for SVD Seminary":

Thanks to the skills and hard work of the nine Brothers and three priests in residence, the Divine Word Seminary, St. Michael's, empty of all but the most necessary activities for the past seven years, will soon again regain much of its former animation. Remodeling began in the spring with thirty rooms on the second and third floors converted into private rooms with baths for visitors on retreat or attending a seminar.

They also plan to install a religious goods store, conference room and a set of mission displays which will show the work done in other missions as well as their own. For the children that he hopes will be visiting the grounds, Father Thibeau has bought ducks and colorful oriental pheasants.⁶²

The *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* ran a similar story on St. Michael titled "Second Chance for Old Mission,"⁶³ and the *Livonia Gazette* welcomed the palpable excitement at the former seminary with the headline, "Conesus Seminary to Launch New Programs."⁶⁴

A HOLISTIC HEALTH CENTER, 1978–1983

In the fall of 1978 the Divine Word Missionaries reached an agreement with two local chiropractors who signed a five-year lease on several buildings at St. Michael's to open the Hemlock Lake Holistic Health Center. An article in the *Rochester Courier-Journal* read:

Dr. Albert Cera of Rochester and Dr. David Redding of Dansville will use the entire north wing of the facility as the health center which will employ the “holistic” approach. Such an approach “looks at the entire body and personality, seeking wellness as the goal rather than just relieving symptoms,” an announcement from the doctors read.

Father Richard Thibeau, Rector of the institution, stated that “this diversification will not interfere with our present program including Marriage Encounter and other Christian retreats which will continue to provide for the care of the retired priests and elderly who have made this their home. The doctors’ statement said that the facility would initially accommodate 60 patients with plans for expanding to 100. Dr. Cera said that the center would employ a variety of professionals in the health field including clergymen.”⁶⁵

Within a few years the Holistic Health Center had started a Nova Vita Health Spa and Restaurant. The center regularly sponsored open houses with the participation of politicians, town supervisors, New York Department of Commerce representatives, American Chiropractic Association representatives, and the Elim Bible Institute. They offered tours of the health center, grottoes, and the winery. With a staff of 15 professionals they offered these services: chiropractic analysis and treatment, applied kinesiology and acupuncture, medical services, laboratory diagnostics, hair analysis, iridology—colonic irrigation, nutritional evaluation and counseling, psychological evaluation and counseling, sauna, whirlpool and massage, yoga exercises, biofeedback relaxation procedures, fasting and weight reduction, herbal and natural remedies, spiritual counseling, and pain control.⁶⁶

The Holistic Health Center’s Nova Vita Restaurant served a variety of natural and traditional foods in a dining room that could accommodate more than 100 diners. One brochure pitched the Holistic Health Center as a place where you could take a year-round “health oriented vacation.”⁶⁷

The Holistic Health Center was successful enough so that in late 1981 Dr. Cera filed a 300-plus-page application to the New York Division of Alcohol Abuse to open a 22-bed treatment center



Repairs being made on the grottoes.

for alcoholics at Conesus and received approval, according to local newspapers.⁶⁸

In August 1983, Dr. Cera was ready to purchase the buildings at the former St. Michael's Mission and some 60 acres of land. He summarized his belief in the program he designed during the five previous years at the Nova Vita Holistic Health Center with a local news reporter, saying:

It is this holistic approach to good health that is the foundation of the work of the Nova Vita Institute. I have a vision to reveal the word of God through truth and healing and this vision was the impetus for the concept of the holistic health center.⁶⁹

A spokesperson for Nova Vita expected the purchase to be wrapped up by early 1984, but Dr. Cera was unable to complete the transaction. He and his Nova Vita Institute vacated Conesus in early 1984.

DIVINE WORD SEMINARY SOLD TO TRINITY INSTITUTE, 1985

Finally in August 1985 Divine Word Seminary, the former St. Michael's Mission House, was sold to Bishop Whitlock's Trinity

Institute, a small, unaffiliated religious group of fewer than 200 with property in New York City, Arizona, and Oklahoma.⁷⁰

DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES LEAVE ST. MICHAEL'S AND THE ROCHESTER DIOCESE

The *Lima Recorder* attempted a positive slant on the departure of the SVDs after more than 62 years in New York State. The sentiment expressed in the final paragraphs echoes the affection that most of us who spent even a few years at St. Michael's Mission House feel about the community surrounding Conesus. We were blessed to live with saintly men and women on truly hallowed ground.

Divine Word Missionaries, who have worked in the diocese of Rochester since 1924, are once more responding to their missionary calling and moving from New York. Commitments to more than 20 parishes and a high school, college and major seminary for training Divine Word Priests and Brothers required the missionary community to opt for re-organization and relocation of available personnel.

Conesus has played a crucial role in the life of the Society of the Divine Word. Divine Word priests and Brothers take with them many wonderful memories and owe a tremendous amount of gratitude for the generosity of the diocese, the area clergy, and the loyal and faithful supporters and friends of St. Michael's Mission House and Divine Word Seminary. Conesus is hallowed ground as many religious vocations were started and nurtured there.

Divine Word priests and Brothers are grateful for the support of the Church in the Diocese of Rochester and the surrounding area and look forward to a continuing relationship.⁷¹

An appropriate way to end this part of St. Michael's Mission History is to give the podium to Betty Green as she relates what the Divine Word Missionaries meant to her and her neighbors.

To dig back into our memories and pull out bits and pieces of our contacts and associations with our special neighbors, the many young men who taught, or were taught, at St. Michael's on Bishop Road, Conesus, is a pleasant task. In Conesus, as well as in many areas of the Rochester Diocese, communities were fortunate to have these young priests fill in for Masses for the local parishes. This extra assistance allowed the additional needed Masses in the communities.

Letting our memories go back to the 1930s, we recall the long summer days of school vacation, when we would take long hikes to the hillside and wander through the beautiful, quiet, and peaceful grotto at the mission. Many residents of the surrounding area were hired for part-time jobs: planting, tying, trimming, and harvesting the grapes. Our memories are many—the students and Brothers hiking into Conesus Center to buy candy, treats, and needed items at either Bears' General Store or Greene's Hardware Store.

When residents entertained guests, one of the special treats was to drive to St. Michael's and explore the grottos. The quiet, peaceful silence seemed to lure you away from the outside world.

It was in the 1930s that the Divine Word Missionaries acquired the land to build their school to prepare young men for the brotherhood and priesthood. These young men were sent to many lands around the world to do the mission work of the Society. Students came from many areas of the world and later as priests and Brothers traveled to many world areas. The names of the Brothers and priests that come to mind are Fathers Paul Burrichter, Raymond Weisenberger, Edward Wald, Bob Hunter, Paul Thunich, Joseph Gunning, Hugo Aubry, Gerald Hellem and Richard Thibeau; Brothers Berchmans Langenkamp, Ignatius DeSante, Francis Gänger and Joseph Hornek, among others.

In the last years of the Society in Conesus, Father Thibeau was instrumental in inviting Conesus residents, especially senior citizens, to join his church family for dinner regularly. It was inspiring and enjoyable to dine and visit with the gathering informally. It was a sad day in 1984, when the doors closed on the seminary.⁷²

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE SVDS LEFT CONESUS?

We know that the Society sold the land, including the buildings, to Trinity Institute in 1985 and left the Rochester Diocese the year before that. I was unable to piece together a complete record of what happened after the property was sold. Here is what I do know looking backward from 2012.

Humanitarian International Service Group, 2001–2012 (ongoing)

In July 2011 I made a trip to the former St. Michael's Mission House with Lima town historian Mr. Douglas Morgan. I located the resident manager, Travis Anderson, of a religious group called the Vision for the Nations Fellowship and made prior arrangements for our visit. Mr. Anderson graciously showed us around the property and answered some general questions about the group and their mission. We viewed the former chapel dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel that the group now uses for community meetings. However, I was unable to arrange for a follow-up phone interview with one of the founders. The work and activities of the Humanitarian International Service Group is described on its website at <http://hisg.org/>.

O-Neh-Da Vineyards & Wines, 1872–2012 (ongoing)

The O-Neh-Da sacramental and table wine brand and label are alive and well. In fact, the vineyards and winery are still at their original location near the former St. Michael's Mission House. Doug Morgan and I had the pleasure of spending time with the onsite manager as he showed us around their operation. Eagle Crest Vineyards now owns the O-Neh-Da operation. This website offers a short history in which Bishop McQuaid and the Divine Word Missionaries' involvement are mentioned: http://www.onehda.com/Our_History.php.

ALUMNI REMEMBER ST. MICHAEL'S MISSION HOUSE, 2011

Emmerich Koller was a novice at Conesesus. In his memoirs, Koller dedicates a chapter titled “Total Immersion” to his experiences with prayer, silence, work, isolation, and discernment of his vocation as a novice and scholastic at St. Michael’s.⁷³

To give other classmates an opportunity to add their remembrances I created a blog where visitors could reflect and comment on what Conesesus meant to them. These comments add a more personal dimension to this history that you do not get from letters, papers, house journals, and house and provincial council minutes that were stashed for years in archives. Here is a brief compilation, of the experiences of novices and seminarians forty-five-plus years later:

Enjoyable—the best two years of my life, perfect location though rather monastic and remote, welcoming place where I made life-long friends, childlike with no need to make any decisions, hiking, skiing, swimming, climbing ice gullies, going to bed early, cleaning three stories of steps and not finding any dirt when you reached the bottom, picking grapes in the fall along with the bees and tying up grape vines in the spring with frozen fingers, morning prayers before 5:30 a.m., cassocks, 30-day retreat, Father Wagner, Father Musinsky, stone walls and holy masons, public confession of faults, teaching in the Brother candidates school, humored by Rodriguez’s *Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection*, beautiful physical setting, great camaraderie with fellow classmates, learning to communicate in silence while peeling potatoes, finding prayer, reflection and meditation difficult, happy because I was where I wanted to be, unforgettable for many reasons—idealism, lofty pursuit, sincere effort, fervor, devotion, peace, tranquility, even old-fashioned discipline. What made Conesesus most memorable for me was the company of truly outstanding young men dedicated to preparing themselves for missionary service, *ratio* and *correctio*, reading Thomas Merton seriously for the first time, “cibus melior,” rules and regulations for everything, ready and willing to strive for perfection, losing weight during Lenten fast, reading the Bible in Latin, Greek and English, etc.⁷⁴

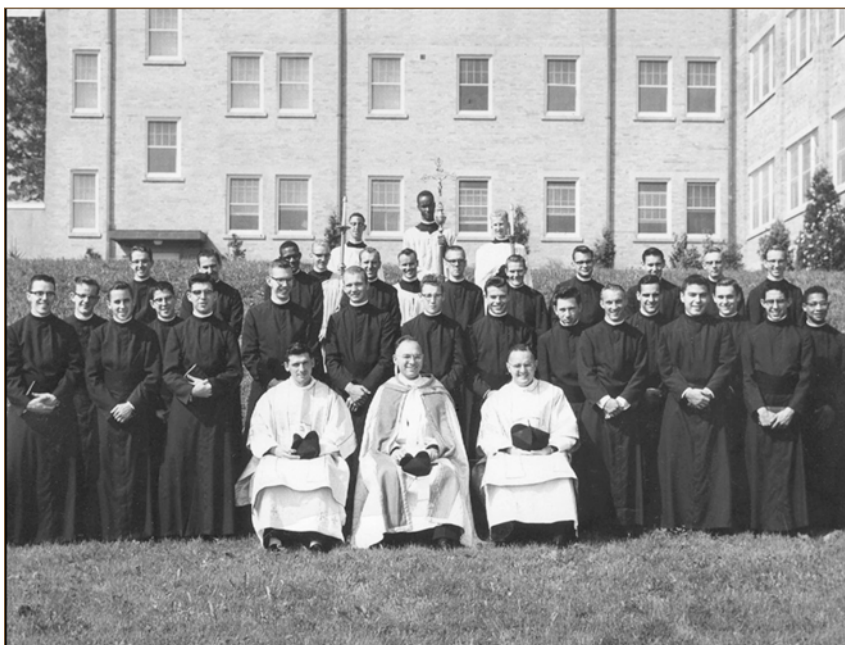
POSTSCRIPT WITH A SPECIAL NOTE AND THANKS

The goal in writing this chapter was to find some of the relevant information and then give the pulpit or podium to others so they could share what they knew and felt about the events at Conesus.

This chapter contains the voices of members and nonmembers in formal and informal writings, whether it was an unofficial history, letters sent to and received from lawyers, bishops and Society of the Divine Word administrators, newspaper accounts, house journal entries, and so on. Thanks go to Sister Connie Derby, archivist at the Diocese of Rochester, for locating and sharing more than 100 documents that primarily contain correspondence between the Society and Rochester diocesan officials. Marcia Stein and Peter Gunther at the Chicago Province Archives at Techny showed me artifacts from Conesus and copies of hundreds of documents. Finally, Mr. Douglas Morgan, Lima, New York, town historian, provided access to several hundred photos of the early days of St. Michael's Mission.

Ultimately, the story or history of Conesus is *not* about a specific location that contained a vineyard, farm, and seminary, and the structures that identified these realities. The real St. Michael's is about those hundreds of dedicated men (and women), whether they were Brother and priest in vows, clerical or Brother novices, belated vocations or candidates and postulants for the Brotherhood, collegiate seminarians in temporary vows, nuns from Austria or Italy, or laymen and laywomen.

Conesus was the cauldron in which saints and sinners cooperated sometimes willingly and sometimes unwillingly because of the shared vision of the Divine Word, who by bringing us to live together at this location and time we became witnesses to an integrated and inclusive society that we would carry and duplicate in the four corners of the globe.



Good days at St. Michael's Mission remembered.

APPENDIX

Superiors/Rectors of St. Michael's Mission House

At St. Bernard's Farm:

Father Joseph Neuhaus	1924–1927
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Father Joseph Gerhards	1927–1928
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There were no SVD supervisors on scene from 1928 through 1935 (see text).

Rectors at St. Michael's Mission House

Father Harry Lauk	1935–1937
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Father Anthony Deppe	1937–1940
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Father Hugo Aubry	1940–1946
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Father Ray Weisenberger	1946–1952
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Father Casmier Murawski	1952–1957
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Father Paul Burrichter	1957–1961
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Father Walter Joyce	1961–1964
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Father Chester Nowicki	1964–1967
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Father Donald Strike	1967–1969
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Father Elmer Nadicksbernd	1969–1970
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Praeses

Father Robert Hunter	1970–1976
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Father Paul Burrichter	1976–1979
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Father Richard Thibeau	1979–1984
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In 1984 St. Michael's closed as an active Mission House.

PERSONNEL AT ST. MICHAEL'S MISSION HOUSE

Year	Priests	Brothers
1925	1	3
1926	1	5
1927	1	5
1928	1	2
1929–35	no SVDs present	
1936	1	6
1937	3	9
1938	5	9
1939	7	10
1940	9	10
1941	10	9
1942–46	<i>Catalogus</i> not printed	

Year	Priests	Brothers
1947	8	8
1948	6	8
1949	<i>Catalogus</i> not printed	
1950	9	9
1951	11	11
1952	10	14
1953	11	14
1954	11	14
1955	11	16
1956	14	13
1957	15	15
1958	15	19
1959	15	23
1960	15	27
1961	14	22
1962	13	23
1963	14	18
1964	16	19
1965	13	18
1966	9	18
1967	9	16
1968	10	19
1969	6	16
1970	4	15
1971	2	11
1972	2	10
1973	2	10
1974	3	8
1975	5	7
1976	4	7
1977	4	7
1978	5	7
1979	5	8
1980	7	7
1981	9	6
1982	8	6
1983	7	5
1984	4	2

STUDENTS AT ST. MICHAEL'S

Year	Belated	Juniors	Scholastics	Clerical Novices	Brother Novices	Brother Postulants	Brother Candidates
1937	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
1938	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
1939	24	0	0	0	0	0	0
1940	30	0	0	0	0	0	0
1941	35	0	0	0	0	0	0
1942–1946	<i>Catalogus</i> not printed						
1947	18	0	0	0	1	0	7
1948	0	0	0	0	3	0	30
1949	<i>Catalogus</i> not printed						
1950	0	0	0	41	11	0	40
1951	0	0	0	81	7	0	40
1952	0	0	0	80	11	0	40
1953	0	0	0	59	16	0	33
1954	0	0	0	52	13	5	35
1955	0	0	0	36	6	11	35
1956	0	33	0	54	11	8	39
1957	0	59	0	60	14	13	38
1958	0	55	0	55	12	3	40
1959	0	55	0	40	6	6	45
1960	0	30	27	1	6	9	62
1961	0	0	27	32	13	0	65
1962	0	0	31	26	17	16	45
1963	0	31	22	23	17	14	30
1964	0	9	21	25	16	9	30
1965	0	8	24	25	8	14	30
1966	0	0	0	0	24	0	40
1967	0	0	0	0	30	0	25
1968	0	0	0	0	25	0	25
1969	0	0	0	0	35	0	0

In 1969 the Brother Candidate High School was amalgamated with Sacred Heart Mission House in Girard, Pennsylvania. Then in 1970 the Brothers' program was combined with the clerical novices and the college students at Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa. The only remaining personnel at St. Michael's were a small number of priests and Brothers.

NOTES

¹Conesus is the name that most SVDs use when talking about this location since it is the name of the closest town and post office. I have tried to be faithful to what this location was called at different times, such as the bishop's farm, St. Bernard's Farm, St. Michael's Mission House, and Divine Word Seminary. Another curious fact is that the SVD foundation is actually on Hemlock Lake and not on Conesus Lake, approximately five miles further west.

²H. Jay Drake, *A Short History of the Divine Word Seminary in the Township of Conesus*, 2.

³Robert McNamara, *The Diocese of Rochester* (Rochester, NY: Christopher Press, 1968), 131.

⁴Ernest Brandewie, *In the Light of the Word: Divine Word Missionaries in North America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 44. Hereafter noted as EB with page number.

⁵Girard chronicle, 1:3.

⁶McNamara, *Diocese of Rochester*, 303.

⁷Document from Chicago Province Archives.

⁸William R. Burrows, "St. Michael's Mission and the Society of Divine Word," in *History of the Town of Conesus in the Twentieth Century* (Conesus, NY: Ganeasos History Keepers, 2007), 106.

⁹SVD *Catalogus* for 1925, 1926, 1927.

¹⁰From the author of any early history of Conesus.

¹¹Burrows, "St. Michael's Mission," 107.

¹²Drake, *Short History*, 3.

¹³Burrows, "St. Michael's Mission," 107.

¹⁴Ibid., 109.

¹⁵Ibid., 110.

¹⁶Father Bernard Bonk, "Report on the O-Neh-Da Situation," September 1934, Chicago Province Archives.

¹⁷Burrows, "St. Michael's Mission," 114.

¹⁸All of this financial "malfeasance" was taking place during the Great Depression.

¹⁹Father Hugo Aubry, letter to Archbishop Edward Mooney, July 27, 1935, Diocese of Rochester Archives.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Archbishop Edward Mooney, letter to Father Hugo Aubry, August 3, 1935, Diocese of Rochester Archives.

²². McNamara, *Diocese of Rochester*, 391.

²³. *Rochester Diocesan Catholic Courier*, “New Mission House Opens in Diocese: Divine Word Society Plans to Train Young Men for Missions,” October 10, 1936, 1, 7.

²⁴. Betty Green, *History of the Town of Conesus in the Twentieth Century*, 98.

²⁵. Br. Joachim (Stephen) Oros, “History of Events, 1935–1938,” 1.

²⁶. *Ibid.*

²⁷. *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁸. *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁹. *Ibid.*, 6, 8.

³⁰. *Ibid.*, 5.

³¹. *Ibid.*, 14.

³². *Livonia Gazette*, “Work Progressing on Mission House,” February 2, 1936, 5.

³³. *Picket Line Posy*, “New Chapel at St. Michael’s Mission,” January 10, 1947, 1.

³⁴. Joachim Oros, “History of Events, 1935–1938,” 13.

³⁵. Conesus house journal, 1936–1937, 3. Chicago Province Archives.

³⁶. Joachim Oros, “History of Events, 1935–1938,” 15–16.

³⁷. *SVD Catalogus*, Conesus community, St. Michael’s Mission House personnel, 1936–1941.

³⁸. Green, *History of the Town of Conesus*, 118–19.

³⁹. A list of members and a chart of those “in training” is shown in the appendix at the end of this chapter.

⁴⁰. EB, 161–63.

⁴¹. *Livonia (NY) Gazette*, “Former St. Michael’s, Conesus, Student from Africa Returns There as Missionary,” October 1, 1959, 2.

⁴². Thomas D’Mello, “A Word from the Provincia’,” *Ghana Province SVD Newsletter*, August–November 2008, 1.

⁴³. *Lima (NY) Recorder*, “Society of Divine Word Holds Retreat for Boys,” October 19, 1966, 7.

⁴⁴. *Livonia (NY) Gazette*, “Seminarians Visit Corning Glass Center,” November 12, 1964, 7.

^{45.} *Livonia (NY) Gazette*, “New Clerical Novitiate and Junior College of Divine Word Missionaries at Conesus Will Be Blessed Next Monday Morning, June 17, at 11,” June 13, 1957, 1.

^{46.} Casimir Murawski, Report to the Provincial Chapter, June 24, 1957, 1–4. Chicago Province Archives.

^{47.} Casimir Murawski, Report to the Provincial Chapter, December 12, 1957, 1. Chicago Province Archives.

^{48.} Attachment to the Application Seeking Senior College Status, March 1, 1961.

^{49.} *Livonia (NY) Gazette*, “Fr. Aubry, SVD, Marks 60th,” February 24, 1966, 5.

^{50.} Robert C. Hunter, letter to friends, October 10, 1969, Diocese of Rochester archives.

^{51.} Donald J. Ehr, “Divine Word Seminary in Conesus to Be Purchased for Rest and Convalescent Home,” November 26, 1969, Diocese of Rochester archives.

^{52.} *Ibid.*

^{53.} Donald J. Ehr, letter to Rev. James M. Moynihan, November 28, 1969, Diocese of Rochester Archives.

^{54.} *Rochester Courier-Journal*, December 15, 1969.

^{55.} Donald J. Ehr, letter to Most Rev. Joseph L. Hogan, April 30, 1970, Diocese of Rochester Archives.

^{56.} Jeremiah M. Kennedy, letter to Father Raymond Sanders, April 12, 1973. Chicago Province Archives.

^{57.} Jeremiah M. Kennedy, letter to broker George L. Huberlie, April 12, 1973. Chicago Province Archives.

^{58.} *Livonia (NY) Gazette*, “St. Michael’s Seminary Sold: Will Be Farm for Young Drug Offenders,” September 20, 1973.

^{59.} Robert C. Hunter, letter to Bishop Hogan, Rochester, January 5, 1974, Diocese of Rochester Archives.

^{60.} Robert C. Hunter, Proposal for More Effective Use of Divine Word Seminary, Conesus, New York, January 5, 1974, Diocese of Rochester Archives.

^{61.} Sharon Darnieder, “Rosary Grottoes Respond to Restoration,” *Rochester Courier-Journal*, August 21, 1974, 12–13.

^{62.} Sharon Darnieder, “New Day Dawning for SVD Seminary,” *Rochester Courier-Journal*, August 21, 1974. 22.

^{63.} Al Wilson, “Second Chance for Old Mission,” *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, July 7, 1974, 7.

^{64.} Judy Morsch, “Conesus Seminary to Launch New Programs,” *Livonia (NY) Gazette*, August 8, 1974, 15.

^{65.} *Rochester Courier-Journal*, “Lease Signed on St. Michael’s; ‘Holistic’ Center Envisioned,” October 4, 1978, 5.

^{66.} Nova Vita Health Spa Brochure, open house celebration, September 15, 1979.

^{67.} The Hemlock Lake Holistic Health Center brochure, 1980.

^{68.} *Lima (NY) Recorder*, “Dr Cera Gets Okay to Open Treatment Center for Alcoholics,” July 16, 1981, 6.

^{69.} *Livonia (NY) Gazette*, “Changing Role of the Divine Word Mission,” September 1, 1983, 2.

^{70.} *Livonia (NY) Gazette*, “Divine Word Seminary in Conesus Sold,” August 15, 1985, 1, 5.

^{71.} *Lima (NY) Recorder*, “After 60 Years SVD Priests, Brothers Leave the Rochester Diocese,” August 21, 1986, 2.

^{72.} Green, *History of the Town of Conesus*, 99–102.

^{73.} Emmerich Koller, *Good Dogs Do Stray: Memoir of an Immigrant from Hungary* (Victoria: Trafford Press, 2000), 298–318.

^{74.} Comments left on the St. Michael’s Mission House 1924–1984 blog, June–July 2011.