

Confraternity Membership Lists, c. 1796-1858
St. Mary's Seminary Chapel, Baltimore, MD
Transcriber's Notes

Background

The historic chapel of St. Mary's Seminary & University (est. 1791) was dedicated in 1808 and built on the original campus of the seminary in what is now the Seton Hill neighborhood of Baltimore City[†]. The seminary was established by the Sulpician Fathers, an apostolic society of diocesan priests dedicated to the formation of priests for the Catholic Church, who arrived in this country from France in 1791. The seminary remained at this location for the years 1791-1969. Today, the Seminary continues to operate on a second campus that had been opened in the Roland Park neighborhood of the city in 1929.

Over its history, the chapel served the seminary and college communities located on the campus, as well as the families in the surrounding neighborhood. It was also home to a special ministry that had been established for Baltimore's community of French-speaking Haitian refugees over the period, 1796-1833. Members of this community were of European and African descent, free and enslaved. Although most of the early records for the chapel have been lost, the lists created for those individuals who were enrolled in the three confraternities* established at the chapel: Our Lady of Mount Carmel (1796-1858), Our Lady, Help of Christians (1815-1845; listed as Notre Dame Auxiliatrice in the register), and Our Lady of the Rosary (1802-1857). Membership in these confraternities was not restricted to individuals who worshipped at the seminary chapel. In addition to parishioners, faculty, staff, and students, can be found the names of individuals who lived in different parts of the city as well in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where Sulpician priests also served. The names recorded in these lists reflect the diverse makeup of the different communities that worshipped at the chapel and how they changed over time.

[†]: The chapel is part of St. Mary's Spiritual Center and Historic Site, which is owned and maintained by the Associated Sulpicians of the United States.

*: In modern terms, a confraternity is a church-sponsored program of faith formation. Membership is voluntary and open to laity, clergy, and religious. Religious instruction, spiritual reading, frequenting of the sacraments, and the performance of charitable acts are central elements. A confraternity is dedicated to a particular devotion, ex., the Rosary.

Transcribers' Notes for Centralized Name Index

The Sulpician priest Rev. Jean-Marie Tessier (1758-1840) was Superior of the U.S. Sulpician community, 1810-1840, director of the special ministry to the Haitian refugee community, 1796-1827, and spiritual director of the chapel's confraternities, 1796-1833, during which time he maintained the membership lists for the confraternities. A native of France, the records he entered were written in French. Transcribers made the decision to translate the terms used by Rev. Tessier from French into English (veuve/widow; Madame/Mrs.) The French names of

members were not Americanized, but transcribed as written. However, because the use of accents was inconsistent throughout the records, it was decided to transcribe the names without them.

A list of commonly used terms and abbreviations was created for those people interested in consulting the original records and has been included in the Additional Notes section of this document.

In instances where an entire or partial name was crossed out, the decision was made to create an entry for the name, unless it was obvious that the name had been mistakenly entered as a duplicate and appears elsewhere on the list. It is noted in the comments if the name was crossed out.

Explanation of Fields used in the Centralized Name Index

Last, First and Middle Names: Names have been transcribed to the best of our ability. In a number of instances, only a partial name was recorded. In cases where a last name was not recorded, "Surname" was entered. When a first or middle name was not recorded, the field was left blank. Distinguishing between what was a first, middle, or surname also presented challenges and may be incorrect in some cases.

If a name was indecipherable or could only be partially transcribed, this was noted. Dashes were used to indicate unreadable letters and questions marks to denote uncertainty or a possible spelling.

If a person is listed with multiple last names, ex., a married woman whose maiden name is noted, the person is listed under the name used at the time the record was made. Former last names are entered in the Last Name field and are separated by forward slashes. Likewise, if a nickname was recorded, this information was entered in the field for First Name. The first name and nickname are separated by a forward slash.

If the transcriber is able to provide a name that is either missing or incomplete, this information has been placed in brackets.

Please note that the spelling of names in these records was not consistent. As a result, it is not unusual to find a name listed under several different spellings. Transcribers have made the decision to list surnames that appear under multiple spellings together. (Ex., de la Rue/dela Rue/Delarue/Larue) When searching for a name, it is always best to check under multiple spelling variations to ensure that it is not missed.

Event: This field identifies the confraternity to which the individual belonged. The field was left blank if the name recorded was not a member of a confraternity.

OLA: Our Lady, Help of Christians (Notre Dame Auxiliatrice)

OLMC: Our Lady of Mount Carmel

OLR: Our Lady of the Rosary

SHJ: Sacred Heart of Jesus[^]

[^]: At the end of the section for the Our Lady of Mount Carmel confraternity is a list with the names of Baltimore-based members of the Sacred Heart of Jesus confraternity founded at the Visitation Monastery chapel in Georgetown, Washington, D.C., dated 1826. Because there are only 6 names on the list, it has been left with the records for the Our Lady of Mount Carmel confraternity. The name of the confraternity has been noted in the Centralized Name Index.

Date: This field indicates the dated list on which the individual's name was recorded.

Role: This field identifies the person's association with the confraternity. While the overwhelming majority of people were members of a confraternity, a number were listed because of their relationship to a member. The following abbreviations were used:

MEM – Member
MNT - Mention

Sex: One category Rev. Tessier used to organize membership lists was gender. This field notes the identified gender for the individual. In cases where gender was not identified and could not be determined, this was noted instead of leaving the field blank. The following abbreviations were used:

F - Female
M – Male
X – Unknown

Color: Another category Rev. Tessier used to organize membership lists was color, although it should be noted that Rev. Tessier was not always consistent or correct. This field provides the information noted by Rev. Tessier on members he identified to be of African descent. The descriptors he used were black, mulatto, and colored. In the transcribed records, the following abbreviations were used:

B – Black
C – Mixed descent

Status: In most cases, the legal status of the individual was NOT noted on membership lists and the field was left blank. This field provides the information that was noted by Rev. Tessier, largely in regard to members of African descent. See the Additional Notes section for the terms Rev. Tessier used. Central Name Index abbreviations:

F - Free
EN - Enslaved
HE – Enslaver

Location: Although the confraternities were based at St. Mary's Seminary Chapel in Baltimore, the lists reveal that they included members from faith communities in Emmitsburg, Maryland,

and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This field has been included to identify which members lived outside of Baltimore.

Comments: This field was used to note additional information noted in the record, including title and location, or to clarify an issue such as relationship to another person listed in the records, and for notes of the transcribers.

If a person was identified as an enslaved person in the records, the enslaver's name was noted in the comments. Likewise, if a person was identified as an enslaver, the names of the people they enslaved were noted in the Comments field. The first name listed is that of the person associated with the enslaver in a specific entry. Other names listed are those identified elsewhere in the records and are separated by a hyphen.

Additional Notes

A key to the abbreviations used in the Central Name Index can be found on the last page of the Central Name Index.

Unless otherwise noted, St. Mary's Seminary Chapel, Baltimore, Maryland, is entered in the fields for Event-Place and Place-Location. By 1830, however, it appears that Rev. Tessier no longer identified the location of members who lived outside of Baltimore. Even though it appears that members from Emmitsburg remained active in the confraternities, St. Mary's Seminary Chapel, Baltimore, Maryland, has been entered in the fields for Event-Place and Place-Location.

A separate sheet was maintained by Rev. Tessier that lists the names of members who volunteered to engage in an hour of Eucharistic Adoration, c. 1829-1832. The decision was made to create a new entry only if a person's name wasn't found on a membership list. If an entry did exist, it was noted in the Comments field that the person was also listed on the Adoration schedule.

Priests, religious, and students at St. Mary's College and St. Mary's Seminary were identified, even if this information was not noted in the records.

Terms and abbreviations used by Rev. Tessier:

Dit/Ditte – called/nickname

“M” written after the name was used to denote Mulatto

M - Monsieur (Mr)

Mere - Mother

M^{de} – Madame (Mrs)

M^{lle} – Mademoiselle (Miss)

Mulatre libre – Free mulatto

“N” written after the name was used to denote Negro/Black

Nee – formerly/maiden name

Negre/Negresse de – Enslaved black person of

Negre/Negresse libre – Free black man or woman

Sr – Religious sister

Veuve/V^e/V – widow and abbreviations for widow