

# Barquilla de la Santa Maria

BULLETIN of the Catholic Record Society -  
Diocese of Columbus

Vol. XXVI, No. 7

July 22: St. Mary Magdalene

July, A.D. 2001

## Courage and Modesty in Plenty: The Life of Madeleine Vinton Goddard Dahlgren

Part I

by Donald M. Schlegel

As a very little girl, in "the pleasant village" in Ohio where she lived, Madeleine Vinton persuaded a piously precise relative to take her to see a travelling circus. "Our infantile imagination, already overheated by diligent reading of the 'Arabian Nights,' at once took fire when the sublime elephant, invested with gorgeous red trappings, entered the ring; and, escaping the grasp of our horrified matron, with one bound we made for the charmed enclosure and had a ride on that elephant. Seated on the back of the monster we shut our eyes to the ignoble crowd below, and for once, if never again, enjoyed an illusion. We were an Oriental princess, and the swaying movement and heavy tread of the beast was a part of the enchantment; and although we were soon restored to the realities and proprieties of our baby life by the almost convulsive clutch of our angry escort, who made an energetic and speedy exit with us, yet the pleasurable recollection still overrides in our mind the scandal and the penitential after-scene..."<sup>1</sup> The young girl's bravery and success on this occasion represents many occasions in her life: her insistence on finding the true Church; her journey to South America with only a nurse and twin infants; her defiance of a storm on the Pacific; and her opposition to the 'political correctness' of many women of her time are but a few examples. And yet one of her sayings was,

"our men must be brave and our women modest." In fact she was both, but her courage usually took a private form and came to the public notice only when necessary.

The Diocese of Columbus has some claim to this remarkable lady, who became the society queen of our nation's capital, for within its boundaries (as formerly constituted) was Gallipolis, the place of her birth and childhood, and (still today) are Vinton, the county named for her father, Zanesville, where she spent some of her teenage years and her early married life, and St. Mary Church in Lancaster, apparently the place of her First Holy Communion.

### Family Background

Madeleine's maternal grandparents were Jean Pierre Roman Bureau and his wife, Madeleine Francoise Charlotte Marret. Jean Pierre was the only son of a military officer and grandson of a surgeon, Dr. Cruchet of Paris. At a young age, on a dare, he jumped from a high limb of a tree and fractured a hip. As a result he seemed condemned to being a lifelong cripple. His mother, however, had a strong faith and as the French Revolution was breaking out she took him to the shrine of Our Lady of Liesse to make a novena for his cure. We cannot know today, of

course, how irreparable the injury truly was, but at the end of the nine days he was able to hang his little crutches upon the chapel's wall and was given a medal of Notre Dame de Liesse as a memorial of the event.

Bureau left Paris at the age of 19 with the colonists who had been attracted to Ohio by the false promises of the promoters of Gallipolis. As early as 1795 he became a prominent leader among the French settlers and for many years he held office in the township, town, county, and state governments. He also was a merchant and a surveyor. In 1799 he married Madeleine Marret, daughter of two of the original colonists. It is related that at the time there was no justice of the peace in that part of the country and they were obliged to obtain one from Point Pleasant, Virginia. The ceremony was performed on a boat on the river, in order to be in the jurisdiction of Virginia.<sup>2</sup> Their children were Madelaine Romaine Bureau who became the wife of Dr. LeMoyne of Washington, Pa., (for whom LeMoyne College in Memphis was named); Romaine Madeleine Bureau, the future Mrs. Vinton; Charles Bureau (1812-1848); and Mary Bureau who died in infancy.

Henry Howe described Mr. Bureau in the 1840s as "a little, vivacious, old gentleman, very urbane, graceful and smiling; evidently wanting everybody to feel as joyous as himself."<sup>3</sup> That, no doubt, is how his granddaughter also remembered him. He died on the last day of the year 1851.

Vinton County, Ohio was named for Madeleine's father, Samuel Finley Vinton, an eminent statesman. The Vinton family had arrived in Massachusetts by 1648 and claimed to be of French Huguenot descent. Samuel was born in South Hadley, Mass. in 1792, graduated from Williams College, and soon after 1816 settled in Gallipolis, Ohio, where he took up the practice of law.<sup>4</sup> In 1822 he was, unexpectedly to himself,

nominated and then elected to Congress, an office to which he continued to be elected by constantly increasing majorities for fourteen years, when he voluntarily withdrew from public life in 1837. Six years later he was again sent to Congress and served until 1851, when he declined any further service.

Mr. Vinton originated and carried through the House many measures of very great importance to the country. During the period of the war with Mexico, he was Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means. During his entire course of public life he had ably opposed various schemes for the sale of public lands that he felt, if carried out, would squander the nation's patrimony. He originated and carried through the House, against much opposition, the law which created the Department of the Interior. He had a great interest in the welfare of the American Indians. Senator Ewing said of him, "He was a wise, persevering, sagacious statesman; almost unerring in his perceptions of the right, bold in pursuing and skilful in sustaining it."

In June, 1824 Mr. Vinton married Romaine Madeleine Bureau of Gallipolis, with whom he had two children, John (1828-1831) and Sarah Madeleine. Mrs. Vinton died in 1831 at the young age of twenty-nine, leaving her husband with the five-year old daughter. We know little of Mrs. Vinton, other than that she had attended a French boarding school in Philadelphia, but that she was dearly loved is testified by the fact that two of Mr. Vinton's brothers named daughters after her.

In 1851 Mr. Vinton was the unsuccessful Whig candidate for Governor of Ohio. In 1853 he became President of the Cleveland and Toledo Railroad for a year for the purpose of a thorough reorganization. After 1854, though he occasionally visited Gallipolis, he resided continuously in Washington, D.C. and there argued some cases before the Supreme Court.



*Samuel Finley Vinton*

He died in Washington on May 11, 1862 and, at his request, was buried in Pine Street Cemetery in Gallipolis with his wife and infant son.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, like most of the French colonists, Mr. Bureau in his youth had lost, or perhaps never really took hold of, the Catholic Faith of his ancestors. Mr. Vinton, according to his daughter, "never associated himself with any of the religious denominations, although he reverently believed in God and His revealed law, so far as he understood it."<sup>6</sup> Madeleine had to find her own way to the Church, through the assistance those whom Divine Providence placed along her path.

#### **Madeleine Vinton Seeks the Truth**

Madeleine was born in Gallipolis on July 13, 1825. When she was only five her mother died, on May 31, 1831. Her little brother died that same year and her grandmother Bureau died on

June 22, 1834. This pretty and dainty grandmother had exercised the only Catholic influence of Madeleine's early years, having the girl kneel at her knees every evening and recite an Ave Maria in French. Madeleine's chief memory of this, however, was resentment at being made to recite in French instead of in English. Madeleine and her father were left to care for each other, along with her grandfather Bureau.

Like her mother, she was educated at a French boarding school in Philadelphia, in her case that of Monsieur Picot.<sup>7</sup> She also spent a term, from December of 1836 until the following March, at the Convent of the Visitation in Georgetown, D.C.<sup>8</sup> Founded in 1799, by the 1830s this convent had over fifty "cultured and scholarly Visitation nuns." The school had over 100 boarders and many more students attended the free school. The academy was pre-eminent among boarding schools and was attended by the daughters of the diplomatic corps at Washington and other influential families around the nation. She attended, however, with the express request that she not receive any religious instruction.

As her education progressed she read the old books in the homestead library, including a translation of the Jesuit Molina's history of Chile, which she read with the intense interest normally given to a thrilling romance.<sup>9</sup> The 1840-1841 season, at the age of fourteen and fifteen, she spent in Gallipolis with her grandfather in his rambling old house. There she read in his library deadly books of "the infidel school" by Rousseau, Voltaire, Volney, and others; later in life she was amazed that she had read these with no harm to herself. She also discovered English authors as well as McPherson's poems of Ossian. The latter aroused in her a poetic imagination; "with Ossian in my hand at dead of night, I would open the windows of my room to apostrophize the moonbeams, the stars, the clouds, the whispering winds or the majestic flow of the noble river near the house!"

After a year in Gallipolis, Madeleine's father sent her to Putnam, the trans-Muskingum suburb of Zanesville, to live with his sister Sarah, the wife of Dr. Robert Safford. In the rigidly Puritan atmosphere of this household, where the elders of the Presbyterian church of the village were always welcome, Madeleine received her first formal religious training. Despite the religious turmoil that this brought to Madeleine, the aunt was unselfish and affectionate and the two years spent there were happy ones. Madeleine devoured the Old Testament and then the New. A course of logical Euclidian geometry at the local "female seminary" combined with the Protestant teaching of self-interpretation of the Bible and her longing for maternal love, felt ever since the loss of her own mother, led her to three conclusions. "First, that the Mother of Christ was a Mother in Heaven, and must be the highest of created beings... Then...that when the Christ died to save us He must have left one, and only one Church for all Christians. It was incredible, that in such an all-important point the Savior could have failed to finish His work... Then, strangely enough, I was certain that whichever Church this was, it must be known by being able to perform miracles, or indicated by miraculous proof." Convinced of Catholic truth, without knowing where to find it, she placed herself on the "anxious bench" and was prayed for in a Presbyterian prayer-meeting. Of course the minister and her family, upon learning of her conclusions, denounced them as "papistical trash," but these good-intentioned people were contradicted by their own doctrine of personal interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

In December of 1843 as Congress re-assembled Madeleine returned to her father, who wanted her nearby and wished to introduce her to society. She was moving along his desired path when, one day, she went with a friend to visit the Academy of the Visitation at Georgetown. (Perhaps this friend was Ellen Ewing of Lancaster, who attended Visitation from 1839 to

1842, for their fathers were friends.) Once in the parlor there, memories of Madeleine's previous few months within those walls flooded upon her. "The good Sisters have wonderful memories, and warm-hearted recollections of their former pupils, and so soon as it was known that I had once been one of their children, the big door opened to me again, and I was welcomed in a way that made me feel instantly as if I had returned to an old home,--a peaceful home of endearing shelter from the cold world." She asked her father to allow her to remain at Georgetown as a pupil during that session and, after some hesitation, he agreed. As a "parlor boarder" she did not enter any classes or conform to all of the disciplinary rules of the convent, but devoted her time to French literature and music. She attended the early Mass, without understanding, and was not given any catechetical instructions, nor did she discuss any religious ideas with the Sisters.

By chance, or rather by Providence, Madeleine was in the infirmary with a headache when the infirmarian was visited by a Mrs. Mattingly. In their conversation the old ladies mentioned a miracle that had been granted to the visitor some twenty years earlier. Madeleine, hearing this, begged to be told all and Mrs. Mattingly kindly told of her cure from the final stages of cancer by a novena in honor of the Blessed Sacrament (a cure then famous but today all but forgotten) and of a subsequent cure eight years later in the convent itself of another malady via prayers to the Mother of God and use of a miraculous medal. This was the evidence that Madeleine had wanted and she became a Catholic in faith, if not yet in knowledge or profession. She was encouraged in heavenly things, though not instructed in the faith, by a young postulant at the convent, Sr. Eulalia, who was herself a convert and knew the opposition that Madeleine would face when she returned home.

At the end of the term, June, 1844 she went for a

short visit to her aunt Madeleine LeMoyne in Washington, Pa. and then returned to Washington with her father. In December she introduced herself to Father J. P. Donellan at St. Matthew Church and explained to him her living but uninstructed faith. He gave her good books to read and daily instructions until early in 1845 she was ready for baptism. Before taking such a step, however, Father Donellan told Madeleine that she must let her father know of it. Approached in his study, her father opposed such an action but in the end said that, if she would wait a year without declaring her opinion, to be sure of her convictions, then he would not oppose her. Next day she returned to Father Donellan and they both agreed that, except for a delay of her baptism, Mr. Vinton's request was not unreasonable. They went at once into old St. Mathew's where she was baptized and then she went to share her joy with Sister Eulalia "before beginning to wear my mask of silence."

The winter and spring were spent in Washington social circles, in dinners and dances in company with her father. The summer of 1845 she spent again with her Aunt Sarah in Putnam, Ohio. The aunt again urged Madeleine to become a member of the Presbyterian Church and was horrified when Madeleine revealed her true religion to her and to pacify her Madeleine promised to add six months to the one-year delay she had promised her father regarding her public acknowledgement of her faith. She spent another gay winter in Washington and finally the time of her open profession of faith approached. Mrs. Ewing invited Madeleine to stay in her home during the weeks of immediate preparation for her First Holy Communion and, though not entirely clear, this seems to have been in Lancaster rather than in Washington, for Rev. Josue M. Young, pastor of Lancaster St. Mary Church, advised her during these weeks and apparently gave the Blessed Sacrament to her. This apparently was in the spring of 1846.

Soon afterward she went to Gallipolis to visit her aged grandfather Bureau, who had been more tender to her than any other and who had sympathized with her even in her erratic moods. He was delighted that she had become a Catholic. "The closed fountains of his heart opened, his memory of early days revived." He told her of the miraculous cure he had received and was overjoyed that the medal he had received in token, which he had thought lost, had already been given to her by her aunt Madeleine during her recent visit to Pennsylvania. Madeleine ascribed her own conversion to the Catholic Faith to the prayers of her grandfather's mother, the same whose faith had taken the lad to Notre Dame de Liesse.

(To be continued)

#### NOTES

- 1) Dahlgren, Mrs. Madeleine Vinton, *South Sea Sketches, a Narrative*; Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1881; pp 55-56
- 2) *Historical Hand-Atlas...containing...Map of Gallia County, and Histories of Lawrence and Gallia Counties, Ohio*; H. H. Hardesty & Co., Chicago and Toledo, 1882; p viii
- 3) Howe, *Historical Collections of Ohio*, 1896, I/681
- 4) *Historical Hand-Atlas*, op. cit., p xi; also *The Vinton Memorial...The Descendants of John Vinton of Lynn...* by John Adams Vinton; Boston: S.K. Whipple and Company, 1858. The picture of Mr Vinton is from the latter, courtesy of the State Library of Ohio.
- 5) Howe, op. cit., II/731-732
- 6) Dahlgren, Madeleine Vinton, "Samual Finley Vinton" in *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 4 (1895), pp 231-262
- 7) *ibid.*
- 8) The records of the academy were lost in a fire in 1993, but Sister Mada-anne Gell, V.H.M., archivist, was able to confirm that Sarah Vinton entered there in 1836 and in 1843. Most of the story of Madeleine's early life and conversion is contained in her article, "The Story of a Convert" in *Rosary* magazine, Dec., 1896, 599-611; Jan., 1897, 11-23; and Feb., 1897, 137-149, as pointed out to the author by Patrick J. Mooney.

**St. Patrick Parish, Clarksville  
(Junction City), Perry County  
Register of Baptisms, 1835-1847  
(Continued, from Vol. XXVI, No. 6)**

**1837, continued**

same day [Jan. 2] John H----, son of John Kimy and Ann McDowel, born March 1, 1836; spons. Alexander Clark and Mary Moran. Thos. Martin, O.P.

same day, Sarah Jane, born Dec. 9, 1836, daughter of Thomas McManomy and Margaret Myres; spons. Patrick O'Hara and Margaret his wife. Thos. Martin, O.P.

February 6 John Gordon, son of John Clark and Elenor Gordon his wife; spons. John Clark and Ann Gordon.

same day Sarah Elizabeth, daughter of Oliver Oaks and Mary Johnson; spons. William Johnson and Mary Clark.

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same day Margaret, daughter of John McGew and Hanna Grace; spons. James Grace and Mary his wife. Tho. Martin

March 5 Ann [Nancy] Clark, daughter of Hugh and Rose Clarke; spons. John and Ann Conolly. N. D. Young

March 6 John Fisher, son of Andrew and Ann Mary Fisher; spons. Bernard M-- and his sister. N. D. Young

June 5 Thomas R. Gordon, son of James and Sarah Gordon; spons. William Johnson and Ellen Clark. N. D. Young

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June 5 Jonathan, John, Henry, James, and Panmila [?] Toothwiler, children of Jonathan

and Ann Toothwiler; spons. for Johathan and John, James Green [?], for James, Mrs. McGahan, and for Pamilla, Mrs. McClusky. N. D. Young

June 6 conditionally, Mrs. Ann Tothwiler, wife of Jonathan Toothwiler; spons. Mrs. McGravy. N. D. Young, O.P.

July 6 Alicia Ann, daughter of Mathias Ring and Mary McMallen; spons. James Nangle and Alicia McMallen.

same day John, son of Daniel McKan [McCann] and Ann [Nancy] Cassely; spons. John Cassely and Mary Cassely. J. H. Clarkson

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September 14 Rosanne, daughter of Michael Schully [Scully] and Ann [Nancy] McDonnel; spons. William Sweeny and Bridget Nangle.

same time Lucy, daughter of Henry Gilligan and Bridget Dolin; spons. John McGrary and Mary Dogherty. F. J. H. Clarkson, O.P.

October 1 John, son of Thomas Moran and Mary McDonnel; spons. Daniel Clark and Ann Dougherty. [Clarkson]

October 2 Margaret, daughter of Peter Patride [Patridge] and Ann Quinn; spons. Cornelius Sweeny and Elizabeth McMullin. J. H. Clarkson

**1838**

January 22 Mary, daughter of James and Mary [Gordon] Clark; spons. Daniel and Nelly Clark. N. D. Young

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January 22 Margaret [daughter of] John McKhatton and Margaret McK.; spons. John Nangle and Mary McClaine. N. D. Young, O.P.

March 18 Mary, daughter of Timothy Loirn and Mary Dolin; spons. Arthur McCortney and Bridget Dolin. G. A. J. Wilson

April 28 Rosanna, daughter of Hugh Connelly and Rose McDonnell; spons. Wm. McGary and Catherine Clark.

same time Joseph, son of William Jay and Rebecca Wathen; spons. Joseph Jay and wife. F. J. H. Clarkson

same day Ann, daughter of Hugh Murphy and Ann Harkins; spons. Daniel Kelly and Sarah Kelly. F. J. H. Clarkson

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May 28 John, son of [blank]; spons Bernard Kungler an Mary Wangler[?] or Stork. F. J. H. Clarkson

June 26 Margaret, daughter of John Clark and Ann Donghoo; spons. Allen Clark and Margaret Patton or Clark.

same time William, son of Thomas McMannama and Margaret Myers; spons. John Kenny and Alicia Ann McMullen. F. J. H. Clarkson

August 28 Margaret, daughter of William Patridge and Marg. Clark; spons. John Clark and Margaret Martin. FJHC

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September 2 Margaret, daughter of Barnabas McCulloch and Mary Clark; spons. Daniel Clark and Mary Ann Clark.

same time Margaret, daughter of Thomas Riley and Margaret Grace; spons. Thomas Powers and Hanna McGruw or Grace. FJHC

1839

Feb. 12 Charlotte, daughter of Hugh Clark

and Rose formerly Conolly; spons. John and Catherine Crossin. N. D. Young

Feb. 24 Elizabeth Jane, daughter of John McDonnell and Catherine McGerry; spons. [blank]

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Mar. 24 Mary, daughter of [Oliver] Oaks and Mary Oaks formerly Johnson; spons. William Hoy and Sarah Donothey [?]. N. D. Young

April 28 James Hermon, son of John McCabe and Mary Miller; spons. John Burns and Mary Rafferty.

same day Frances Mar. daughter of John Howe and Sara Runnel; spons. Thomas Duffie and Ellen Dolen.

same day Henry, son of the same Howe and Runnel; spons. Bridget Dolen.

same day John Washington, son of Henry Griffin and Sarah R...[Rush?]; spons. James .... and Hanna Logue.

same day Christin[a], daughter of John W... and Mary Bo...[Bola?]; spons. Joseph Craig & Christ. Hamer[?]. F. J. H. Clarkson

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April 28 Ann Mary, daughter of John Kinney and Ann Kinney; spons. Arthur McCourtney and Mary Sease. FJHC

June 23 Adam Dominic, son of Daniel [recte James?] Clark and Mary (Gordon); spons. William Hoy and Carity [sic] Clark. N. D. Young

June 22 Mary, daughter of Benjamin Hardy and Margaret Hardy; spons. James Row and Louise Row. N. D. Young

(To be continued)

## Abstracts from *The Catholic Telegraph*

(Continued, from Vol. XXVI, No. 6)

November 22, 1851

Pastoral appointments: Rev. Mr. Forde is stationed with Rev. Mr. Boulger at St. Mary's, Chillicothe, to assist in the care of that congregation, and Circleville and adjacent stations.

### IRONTON, LAWRENCE COUNTY

The Most Rev. Archbishop will, God so permitting, visit Ironton on Sunday, 30th of November. He hopes that the American Catholics in that place, Hanging Rock, and Pine Grove will profit by so good an opportunity to approach the Holy Sacrament. The Rev. Mr. Murphy, whose place at Portsmouth will on that day be supplied by a German Clergyman from Cincinnati, will be in attendance.

November 29, 1851

Messrs. Michael Forde, Henry Lange, John Maginn, and Bernard He[m]steger received the Clerical Tonsure at the hands of the Most Rev. Archbishop, in the Seminary Chapel on the 14th of November.

On the 16th of November Messrs. Forde and Winands were ordained Subdeacons. On the 18th, Messrs. Jeremiah O'Connor, M. Forde, and D. M. Winands were ordained Deacons; and on the 21st, Messrs. Winands and Forde were ordained Priests.

Rev. Mr. Vandebroek, O.P., who for some time exercised the Holy Ministry near Somerset,

in this Diocese, lately died at "Little Chute," near Greenbay, Wisconsin. He was struck with apoplexy at the Altar, and survived for one or two days, partially conscious. He was in his sixty-fifth year.

### INFORMATION WANTED

Of JOHN MCDERMOT, native of the parish of Bumblin, county Roscommon, Ireland; he is in this country about 28 years; when last heard of he was (4 years ago) within 28 miles of Chicago, in Illinois, or Mr. Eververn's job (on the canal.) ... his nephew Stephen McDermott, of Columbus, Franklin county, O.

### SOLEMN DISTRIBUTION OF PREMIUMS AT THE PROPAGANDA, THE 4TH SEPTEMBER

Of the American Students in that world renowned College, the following were most distinguished: ...John William Norris... John Keogh... Sylvester Horton Rosecrans, a native of Licking county in this State, sent to Rome by the Archbishop of Cincinnati, obtained a premium in the class of Sacred Scripture and two accessits in Dogmatic Theology. ...Patrick Ryan ...John Quin... In Ecclesiastical History--the second premium was taken by Sylvester H. Rosecrans of Cincinnati. ...William Plowden Morrough ... Augustus McNeal... In the second class of Gregorian Music...Morrough and Rosecrans.

The beautiful new chapel of St. Thomas Aquinas, Zanesville, will be consecrated by the Most Rev. Archbishop on the Third Sunday of Advent.

Subscription: Bene. Magers, Danville, O.  
(To be continued)

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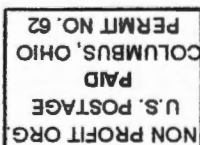
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