

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 operated on this campus over the period 1791-1969, when the decision was made to centralize its program on a second campus that had been opened in the Roland Park neighborhood in 1929. Today, 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.

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 that was conducted over the period, 1796-1833. Members of this community were free and enslaved, white and of color. Although most of the early records for the chapel have been lost, the lists created for those individuals who were enrolled in the confraternities* established at the chapel over the period 1796-1858 have survived. These lists have been transcribed and the names entered into a Centralized Name Index to provide people access to the records for the first time. The names have been organized alphabetical-chronological by confraternity. A digitized version of the membership lists has also been made available.

The membership lists were created for 3 confraternities established at the seminary's 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 and students enrolled at the seminary and college operated at the site, can be found the names of individuals who lived in different parts of Baltimore City as well from Emmitsburg, Maryland, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where members of the Sulpician community 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.

*: 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

⁺: 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.

Transcribers' Notes for Centralized Name Index

The lists have been transcribed as recorded. Please note that the spelling of surnames in these records is not consistent. As a result, it is not unusual to find a surname listed under several different spellings. In certain instances, the decision was made to create an entry that lists the different spelling variations together.

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.

Despite our best efforts some of the names may be spelled or identified incorrectly due to difficulties in reading the handwriting. Distinguishing between what was a first, middle, or surname also presented challenges and may be incorrect in some cases. Dashes were used to indicate indecipherable letters and question marks to denote uncertainty or a possible spelling.

Notations: Notations were inconsistent and incomplete. If a note was made for a name or a group of names (other than color or legal status), it was included in the Comments section. One such example is title. If a title was noted for the individual, ex., Mr. or Mrs., this information was noted in the Comments field. The decision was made to translate the notations from French to English on the centralized name list. A list of the French terms used in the original has been compiled:

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

Accents: The use of French accent marks was inconsistent. The decision was made to transcribe the names without accents.

Explanation of Fields used in the Centralized Name Index

Last, First, and Middle Names: Names have been transcribed and recorded to the best of our ability. In instances where a last name was not recorded, the term “Surname” has been entered. In cases where neither a first or middle name was not recorded, the fields were left blank. In instances when transcribers were unable to determine if the person had a surname, best judgement was used to make a decision. If a name could only be partially transcribed, this partial transcription was noted. Dashes were used to indicate indecipherable letters. Please note that the spelling of names was not consistent. Please check under different variations when searching the records. (Ex., La Combe, Lacombe.)

Confraternity: This column lists the name of confraternity to which the individual belonged or was associated with.

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

Date: This column indicates the dated list on which the individual’s name was recorded. This was done for each confraternity. If a person is mentioned multiple times in the records kept for each confraternity, a separate entry was made for year the name was listed.

Sex: The person’s gender has been identified by first and middles names, as well as by title. If the transcriber was unable to identify gender due to lack of information, an X was used instead of M or F to indicate male or female.

Color: In most cases, the color of the individual was not noted in the record. In many cases, this indicated that the person was white, but not always. If such was the case, the field was left blank. The following abbreviations were used by the person who maintained the records to indicate if a person was black (N), mulatto (M), or of color (C). When working with the records, however, we discovered inconsistencies in this practice. As a result, not every person of African descent was identified. The centralized name index that has been prepared reflects what was written at the time the entry was made, except in circumstances where it has been established elsewhere that the person in question was of African descent. (For example, a number of the women who founded and/or entered the Oblate Sisters of Providence, were members of these confraternities, but their African heritage was not always noted. Because the Oblate Sisters of Providence was a community founded specifically for women of color, we know these women were of African heritage. Because of this, it was noted in the dataset that they were women of color.)

The following abbreviations were used in the dataset:

B – Black

C – Mixed descent or of color

Person Status: In most cases, the legal status of the individual was not noted in the record. If such was the case, the field was left blank. In a number of instances, it was noted if a person was free with the word libre (French for free). It will be noted when this is the case. If a person was enslaved, this status was noted by writing that the enslaved person was “of” another individual. Ex., Marie Jeanne de Mr. Leyritz, was used to denote that Marie Jeanne was an enslaved person of Mr. Leyritz. Conversely, this designation also identified who was the person’s enslaver.

The following abbreviations are used to denote legal status:

EN – Enslaved

F - Free

HE - Enslaver

Comments: This column was used to note additional information noted in the record or to clarify an issue. In cases where it was noted that a person was enslaved or an enslaver, the relationship was noted in the comments.

Additional Notes

In addition to the information recorded in the register for the Our Lady of Mount Carmel confraternity are 13 pages of additional lists that cover the timespan of 1835-1858. These pages have been scanned into a separate file.

Names of enslavers that are not listed as belonging to a confraternity were listed at the end of the name index.

A key to the abbreviations used can be found on a separate sheet at the end of the file. 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.