

# Researching Catholic Ancestors

## *Class 1: The History of Catholics in America*

Rhonda R. McClure, Senior Genealogist

THE BRUE FAMILY LEARNING CENTER



American Ancestors®  
by NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

# Meet today's presenter



Rhonda R. McClure

Senior Genealogist

# Catholic

- Missions were in what became America as early as 1540
- The first English Catholic settlement was St. Mary's in the colony of Maryland in 1634
- Catholicism came down to New England from Quebec with the French-Canadians
- It went west with the ethnic immigrants from Spain, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia

# Earliest Catholics in America

# Spanish Catholic Colonization

- Traces back to 1492 with Columbus' discovery of what would become Puerto Rico and the West Indies
- Spain established a church, diocese, and bishop in Puerto Rico by 1513
- 1530s – Spain began sending Franciscan, Dominican, and Augustian missionaries (later joined by Jesuits) to Mexico

# ***The Conquistadores***

- “Conquerors” with political, economic, & personal motives
- Killed and enslaved Native Americans
- Believed Native Americans should not be converted to Christianity; suggesting they weren’t human

# Pope Paul III – 1537 Paper Decree

- “the Indians are truly men”
- “are by no means to be deprived of their liberty or the possession of their property; even though they be outside the faith of Jesus Christ”
- Punishments against the decree revoked in 1538
- Convinced by Holy Roman Emperor Charles V

# Spanish Catholic Colonization

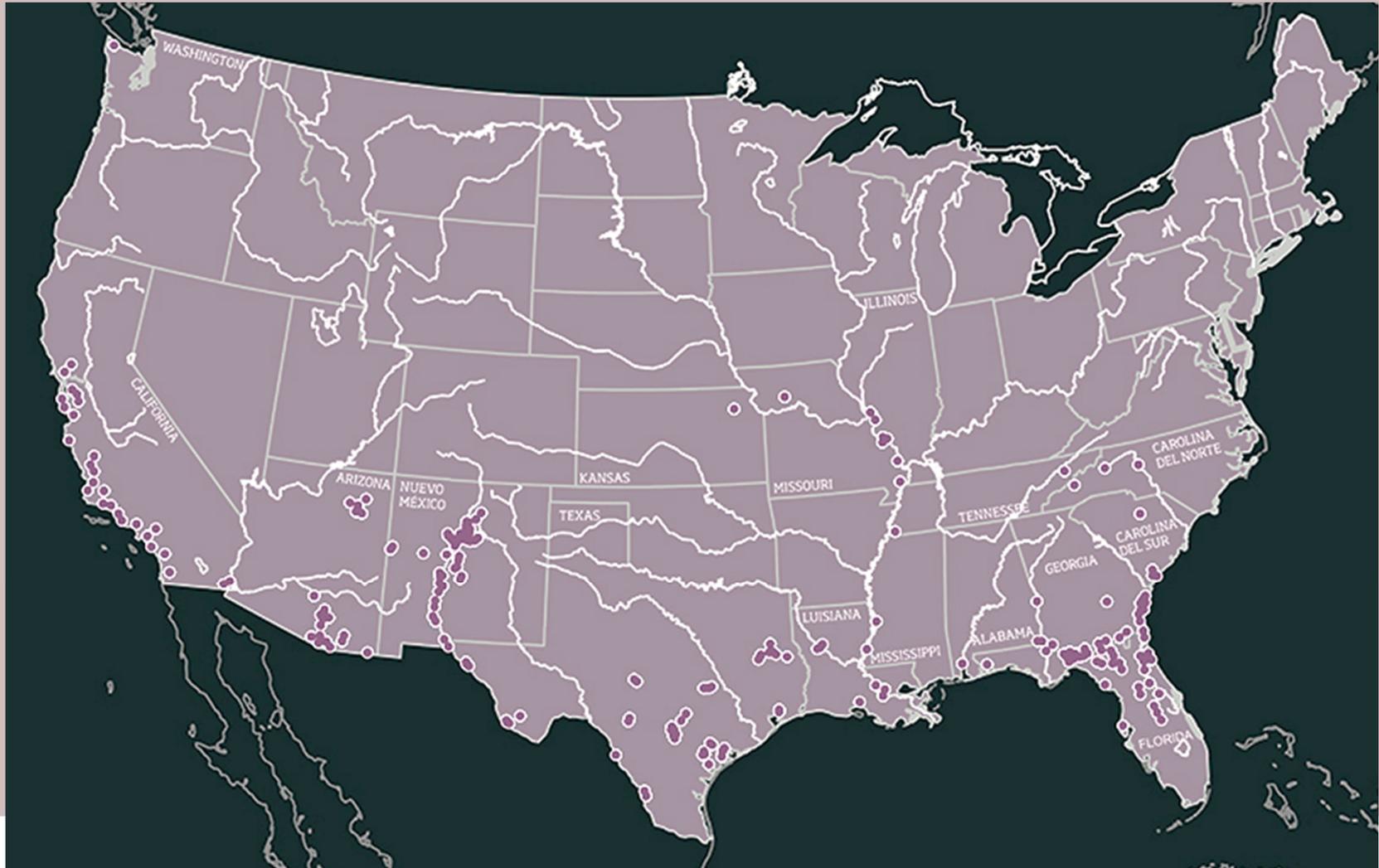
- 1564 – French settlements along coasts of Florida and Georgia prompt Spanish missions:
  - 1565 – St. Augustine
- 1598 – Eight Franciscans & others of the Juan de Oñate expedition crossed into present day El Paso, Texas
- 1691 – Franciscan friars with the Domingo Terán de los Ríos expedition entered present day San Antonio, Texas

# Franciscan Friars

- Accompanied exploratory expeditions
- Assisted in establishing settlements
- Often founded missions near settled indigenous communities
- Had to operate these missions under the Spanish and Portuguese governments and military



# Spanish Catholic Colonization

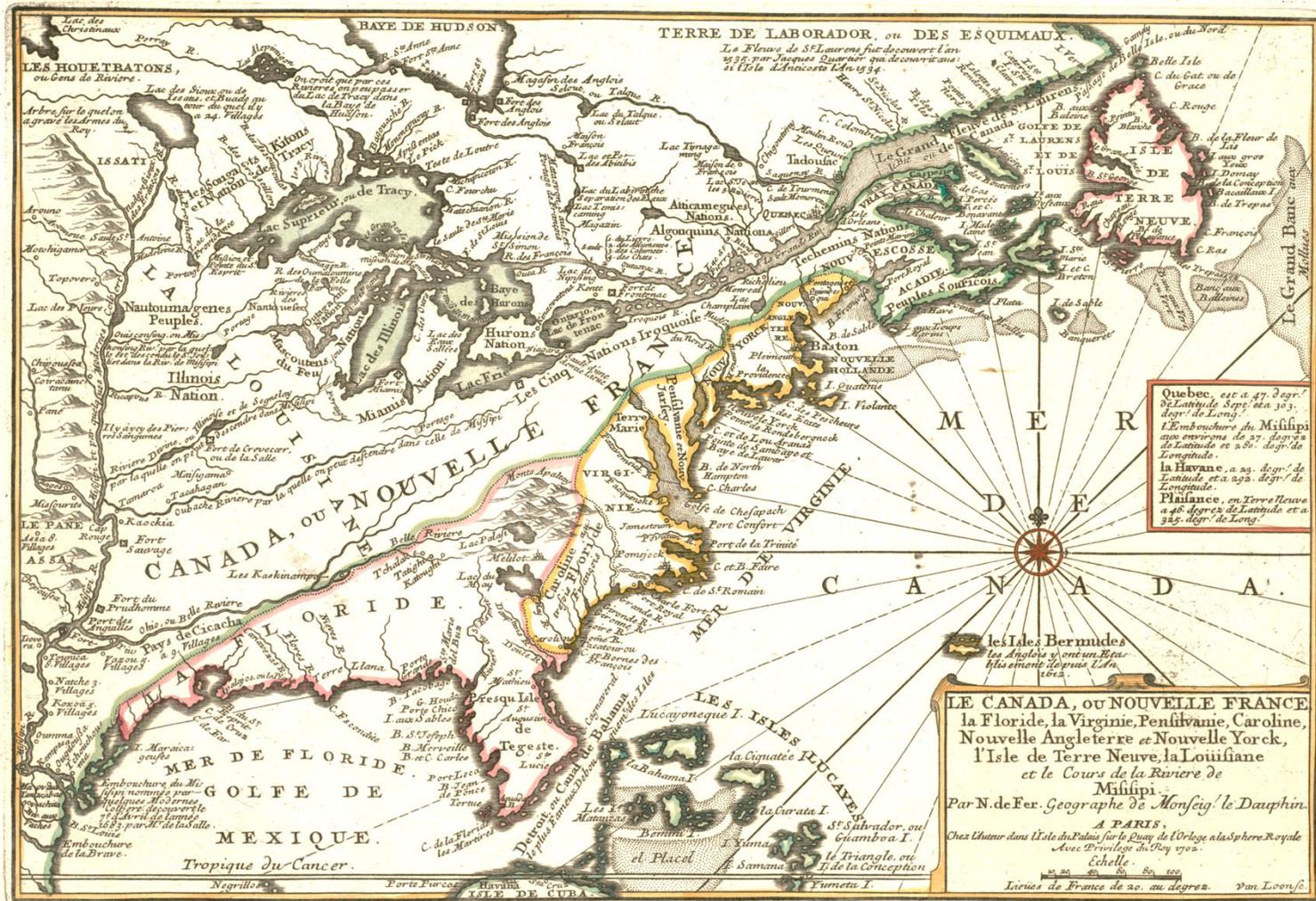




## 1828 Map of Mexico

# French Catholic Colonization

- 1608 – Samuel de Champlain settled at *Pointe du Quebec* (today known as Quebec City)
- Champlain understood the importance of peaceful relations with the Indians
- Negotiated an alliance with the Montagnais, the Algonquian, and the Wendat (a.k.a. Huron)
- Was forced to declare war on the Iroquois
- Iroquois became sworn enemies of the French



1702 Map by Nicolas de Fer

# The Jesuit Relations

- 73 volumes
- Cover travels and explorations of Jesuit missionaries in New France
- 1610-1791

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## The Jesuit Relations (Thwaites)

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# The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents

## TRAVELS AND EXPLORATIONS OF THE JESUIT MISSIONARIES IN NEW FRANCE

1610-1791

THE ORIGINAL FRENCH, LATIN, AND ITALIAN TEXTS, WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS AND NOTES; ILLUSTRATED BY PORTRAITS, MAPS, AND FACSIMILES

EDITED BY  
REUBEN GOLD THWAITES  
Secretary of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Vol. LX  
LOWER CANADA, ILLINOIS, IROQUOIS,  
OTTAWAS: 1675-1677

CLEVELAND: ~~The Burrows Brothers~~  
Company, PUBLISHERS, MDCCC

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## French

148 *LES RELATIONS DES JÉSUITES* [Vol. 60]

Recit d'un 3<sup>e</sup> voyage fait aux Illinois par Le P. Claude Allois.

**I**L falloit au feu pere marquette vn successeur qui ne fut pas moins Zelé que luy. on jetta po<sup>r</sup> cela les yeux sur le p. Claude alloies qui a trauaillé le premier dans toutes nos missions des outaouaks avec vn Courage Infatigable. Il estoit occupé alors en celle de s<sup>t</sup>. f. xavier dans la baye des puants; et il fut bien tost prest a partir.

Nous l'allons entendre parler de son voyage.

SECTION I<sup>re</sup> LE P. ALOUÉS PART SUR LES GLACES, VN JEUNE HO<sup>m</sup>e TUÉ PAR VN OURS, DE LA VENGEANCE QU'ON EN A PRIS, DIUERSES RARETTÉS QUI SE PRESENTENT SUR CE CHEMIN.

**P**ENDANT que ie me preparois pour mon despart le temps n'estant pas encore propre, ie fis quelque visite dans cette baye ou ie baptisay deux adultes malades dont l'un mourut le lendemain l'autre vescu encore vn mois. C'estoit vn pauvre vieillard qui po<sup>r</sup> estre desia caduc, et demy sourd, estoit la risée et le rebut de tout le monde, mesme de ses enfans, mais Dieu ne le rebuta pas, et luy fit la grace de le mettre au nombre de ses enfans par le baptesme, et de le receuoir dans son paradis coe J'ay tout sujet de le Croire. En vne autre visite que ie fis aux outagamis, J'y baptisay six enfans presque tous a l'extremité. Je fus beaucoup consolé de voir vn notable

## English

1675-77] *ALLOUEZ IN ILLINOIS* 149

Narrative of a 3rd voyage to the Illinois, made by Father Claude Allois.

**A** SUCCESSOR to the late father marquette was needed who should be no less Zealous than he. To fill his place, father Claude alloies was chosen, who had labored, the leader in all our missions to the outaouaks, with Untiring Courage. He was engaged, at the time, in that of st. françois xavier in the bay des puants, and was soon ready to set out.

Let us hear what he says of his voyage.

SECTION 1ST. FATHER ALOUÉS SETS OUT OVER THE ICE. A YOUNG MAN KILLED BY A BEAR; OF THE REVENGE THAT WAS TAKEN FOR THIS. VARIOUS CURIOSITIES ENCOUNTERED ON THE WAY.

**D**URING the time while I was making preparations for my departure, the weather not being as yet propitious, I paid some visits along the bay, where I baptized two sick adults, one of whom died the next day. The other lived a month longer; he was a poor old man who, as he was already declining and half deaf, was the jest of Every one, and an object of contempt to all, even to his own children. God, however, did not cast him aside, but granted him the favor of being placed in the number of his children through baptism, and of being received into his paradise, as I have every reason to Believe. On another visit, to the outagamis, I baptized six



# Colonial Period

# The 13 Colonies - Catholics

- By 1775, predominantly emigrated from:
  - England, Germany and France
  - About 10,000 Irish Catholics

# Catholics to the Colonies

## Maryland

- 1700 – 3,000 Catholics
- 1756 – abt. 7,000 Catholics
- 1765 – 20,000 Catholics

## Pennsylvania

- 1756 – abt. 3,000 Catholics
- 1765 – 6,000 Catholics

1783 – 24,000 to 25,000 Catholics in the U.S.  
out of a total population of about 3 million

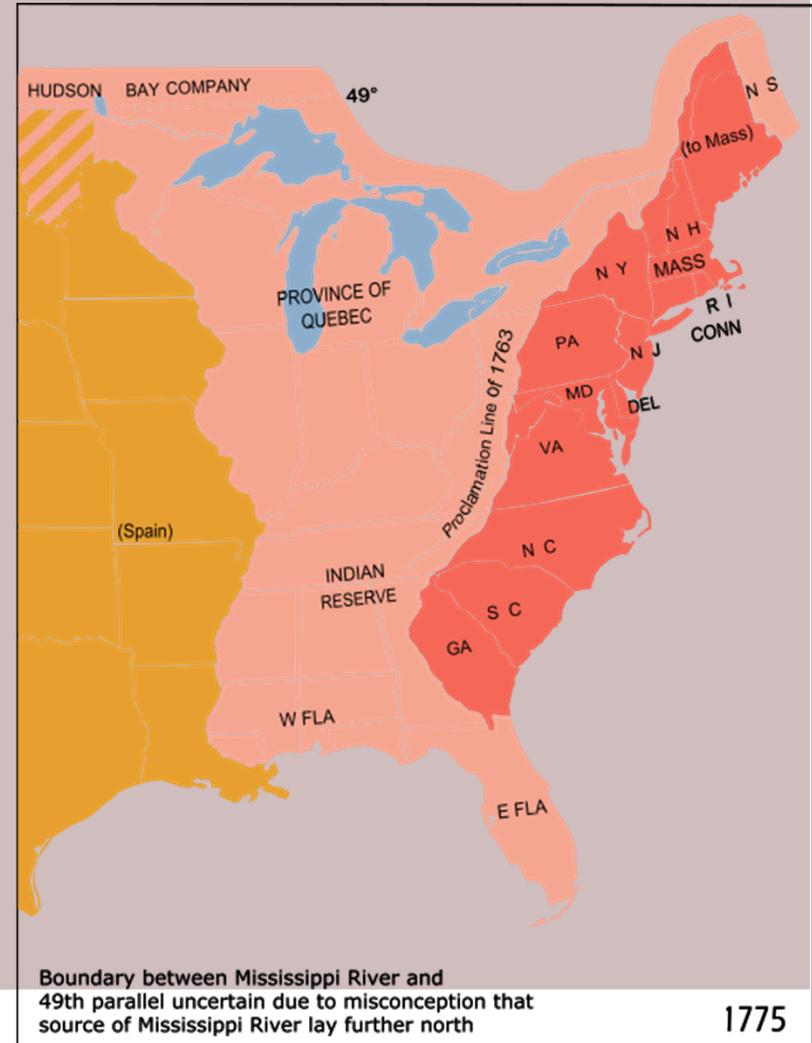
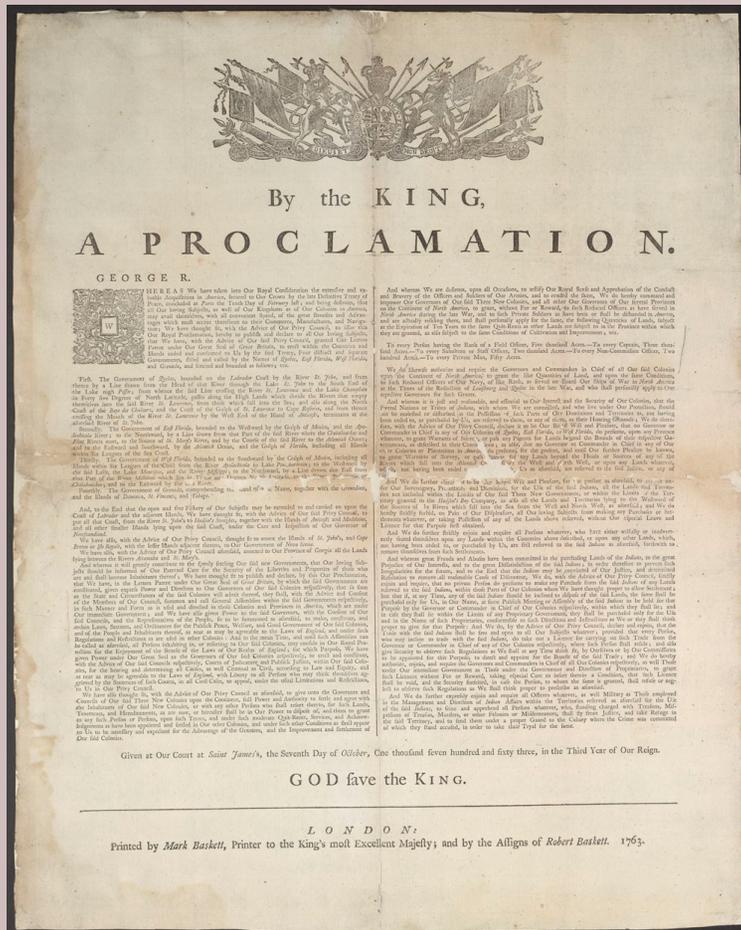
# Maryland

- Maryland was founded by a Catholic, Lord Baltimore, charter issued in 1632
  - As “non-denominational”
  - First to accommodate Catholics
- 1650, Puritans in Maryland repealed this Act of Toleration
- 1658, reinstatement of the Toleration Act
- 1689, repealed again

# Maryland – John Carroll

- First Catholic bishop in the United States
- Joined the Jesuit seminary in Liège, Belgium
- Formally professed as a Jesuit in 1771
- Older brother Daniel Carroll signed both the Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution
- Cousin to Charles Carroll, a Founding Father and a signer of the Declaration of Independence

# Royal Proclamation - 1763



Boundary between Mississippi River and 49th parallel uncertain due to misconception that source of Mississippi River lay further north

1775



# French Missions after 1763

# 1800s



## Land Lost by Mexico, 1821-1853

# The 1800s

- 1800 – Single diocese of 50,000 members
- 1860 – 44 dioceses with more than 2 million members
- 1865 – Protestant missionary efforts threatened Catholic missionary efforts among the Native American reservations

# The Irish Famine

- 1845-1852
- 1 million Irish died of starvation or hunger-related disease
- 1.8 million emigrated to North America
- Marked the beginning of a major migration of Catholics
- Served as unskilled labor throughout the U.S.

# Ethnic & Religious Prejudice

- Poor Irish were seldom accepted
- Hostility was not uncommon by nativists
- Catholic churches were torched



# Ethnic & Religious Prejudice

- Catholicism viewed by many as:
  - Foreign
  - Mysterious
- The arrival of the masses during the Famine turned people's attitudes into bitter hostility:
  - Rioting
  - Church burnings
  - Armed skirmishes

The image shows a digital exhibit interface. At the top left, there is a navigation menu icon and the text "Preserving the Steadfastness of Your Faith". At the top right, there are "About" and search icons. The main content area features a large title "THE BURNING OF THE URSULINE CONVENT" overlaid on a photograph of an old book cover. Below the title is a quote: "The brands from that burning have set fires throughout the country, that seem already to have consumed all the christian virtues and to threaten, that religion itself will not escape unscathed." Preliminary Remarks, An Answer to Six Months in a Convent, xxxvi-xxxvii. The book cover text reads: "OR, THE NARRATIVE OF REBECCA THERESA REED, WHO WAS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE ROMAN CATHOLICS ABOUT TWO YEARS, AND AN INMATE OF THE URSULINE CONVENT". On the right side, there is a vertical text column with a scroll bar, containing a detailed account of the event and its context.

"Preserving the Steadfastness of Your Faith" About

# THE BURNING OF THE URSULINE CONVENT

"The brands from that burning have set fires throughout the country, that seem already to have consumed all the christian virtues and to threaten, that religion itself will not escape unscathed." Preliminary Remarks, An Answer to Six Months in a Convent, xxxvi-xxxvii.

SIX MONTHS IN A CONVENT

OR, THE NARRATIVE OF

REBECCA THERESA REED,

WHO WAS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE ROMAN CATHOLICS ABOUT TWO YEARS, AND AN INMATE OF THE URSULINE CONVENT

On the night of August 11, 1834, a fire broke out around the Ursuline convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts, outside of Boston. The fire was held against the convent by a mob of men who demanded to see her. After a struggle, the convent's doors were opened and the Ursuline nuns and students (most of whom were Protestants) fled through a back door, the nuns were set fire to it and the Ursuline convent was destroyed.

What sparked the violence (untrue) stories about your the convent contributed. A sermon about the threat also helped prepare the ground. These propellants, however, were the class and Protestant denunciations of Charlestown between wealthy daughters to the academic less affluent Congregation and its school a threat. The

## Burning of Ursuline Convent, 1834, Charlestown, Mass.

# Bishop John Hughes



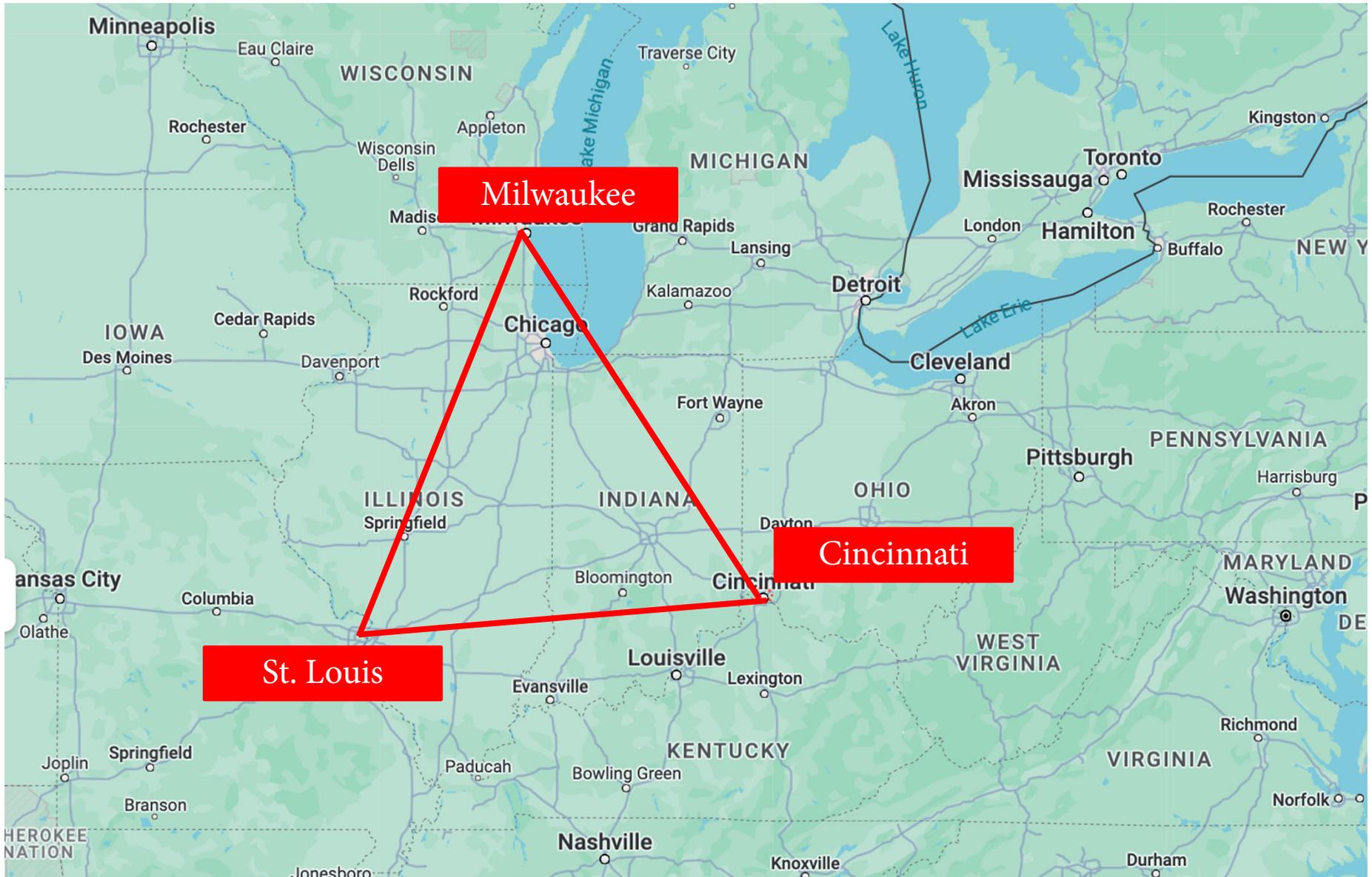
- Was bishop in the 1840s-1850s in New York
- New York Diocese included 200,000
- New York Diocese originally included:
  - New York, state
  - New Jersey, part of

# Irish American Parishes

- Irish immigrants felt more comfortable with Irish priests
- The Irish immigrants predominantly spoke English (due to the outlawing of Irish language by England)
- The parish churches established for Irish Americans were considered very American

# German Catholics

- 1.7 million immigrated to the U.S. between 1820 and 1920
- 2nd largest Catholic immigrant group 1820-1880s
- Received differently from Irish due to:
  - Improved financial situations
  - Vocational skills



# The German Triangle

# German American Parishes

- German Americans still spoke German
- German priests increased in the U.S. as the German Catholics did
- 1843 – Fifty German priests to serve 300,000 German Americans
- 1869 – 1,169 German priests to serve more than 1 million German Americans

# African American Catholics

- Can be traced back to enslaved individuals in Maryland, baptized by Catholic planters
- Migration of slave owners from Maryland to Kentucky in start of 19<sup>th</sup> century:
  - Created significant African-American community in Nelson County, Kentucky
  - Enslaved regularly baptized in Mobile, Alabama
  - New Orleans had a Catholic community of “free people of color”

# African American Catholics

- Predominantly treated by members of their faith in much the same as those of other Christian faiths
- Until 1830s, Jesuits in Maryland owned slaves
- Younger members did want to see them freed
- Instead, they were sold to raise money for educational enterprises in 1837-1838

# The GU272 Legacy

In 1838, Maryland's Jesuit priests sold hundreds of men, women, and children to Southern plantations to raise money for the construction of Georgetown University. Though they faced incredible hardship, most didn't perish. They married and raised children. Today, more than 8,000 of their descendants have been located through genealogical research. Use this site to search for an ancestor and to hear the stories of the descendants.



<https://gu272.americanancestors.org/>

# Ulysses S. Grant's Peace Policy

- Office of Indian Affairs, established partnerships with churches & religious organizations
- These partners operated the government schools
- Among them:
  - Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions
  - Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church
  - American Missionary Association (Congregational)

LIST OF INDIAN AGENCIES ASSIGNED TO THE SEVERAL RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS.

FRIENDS.—Great Nemaha, Omaha and Winnebago, Otoe, and Santee, in Nebraska, and Pawnee, in the Indian Territory. *B. Rush Roberts, Sandy Spring, Md.*

FRIENDS (ORTHODOX).—Pottawatomie and Kickapoo, in Kansas; Quapaw, Osage, Sac and Fox, Kiowa, Comanche, and Wichita, and Cheyenne and Arapaho, in the Indian Territory. *Dr. James E. Rhoades, Germantown, Philadelphia, Pa.*

METHODIST.—Hoopa Valley, Round Valley, and Tule River, in California; Yakama, Neah Bay, and Quinsiet, in Washington Territory; Klamath and Siletz, in Oregon; Blackfeet, Crow, and Fort Peck, in Montana; Fort Hall and Lemhi, in Idaho; and Mackinac, in Michigan. *Rev. Dr. J. M. Bell, secretary Missionary Society, Methodist Episcopal Church, 805 Broadway, New York City.*

CATHOLIC.—Tulalip and Colville, in Washington Territory; Grand Ronde, and Umatilla, in Oregon; Flathead, in Montana; and Standing Rock and Devil's Lake, in Dakota. *General Charles Keating, Catholic commissioner, Washington, D. C.*

BAPTIST.—Union (Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole), in the Indian Territory; and Nevada, in Nevada. *Rev. Dr. H. L. Marchesse, secretary American Baptist Home Missionary Society, No. 38 Astor House office, New York City.*

PRESBYTERIAN.—Navajo, Mescalero Apache, and Pueblo, in New Mexico; Nez Percé, in Idaho; and Uintah Valley, in Utah. *Rev. Dr. J. C. Lewis, secretary Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, 23 Centre street, New York City.*

CONGREGATIONAL.—Green Bay and La Pointe, in Wisconsin; Sisseton and Fort Berthold, in Dakota; and S'Kokomish, in Washington Territory. *Rev. Dr. M. E. Strieby, secretary American Missionary Association, 56 Bond street, New York City.*

REFORMED.—Colorado River, Pima and Maricopa, and San Carlos, in Arizona. *Rev. Dr. J. M. Ferris, secretary Board of Missions of Reformed Church, 24 Vesey street, New York City.*

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL.—White Earth, in Minnesota; Crow Creek, Lower Brulé, Cheyenne River, Yankton, Rosebud, and Pine Ridge, in Dakota; Ponca, in Indian

## List of Indian Agencies...

# Polish Immigrants

- 1854 – established Panna Marya (“Village of our Lady”) in central Texas
- 1863 – small, struggling, Polish-American Catholic community in Chicago
- 1864 – the launching of religious & fraternal Society of St. Stanislaus Kostka in Chicago
- 1918 – thirty-five Polish parishes in the Catholic archdiocese of Chicago

# Polish Immigrants

- 1870-1920: close to 2 million Polish immigrants to the U.S.
- Majority were Catholic
- Many were farmers pushed out by agrarian losses
- Industrialization also played a role

# Polish Immigrants

## Worked In

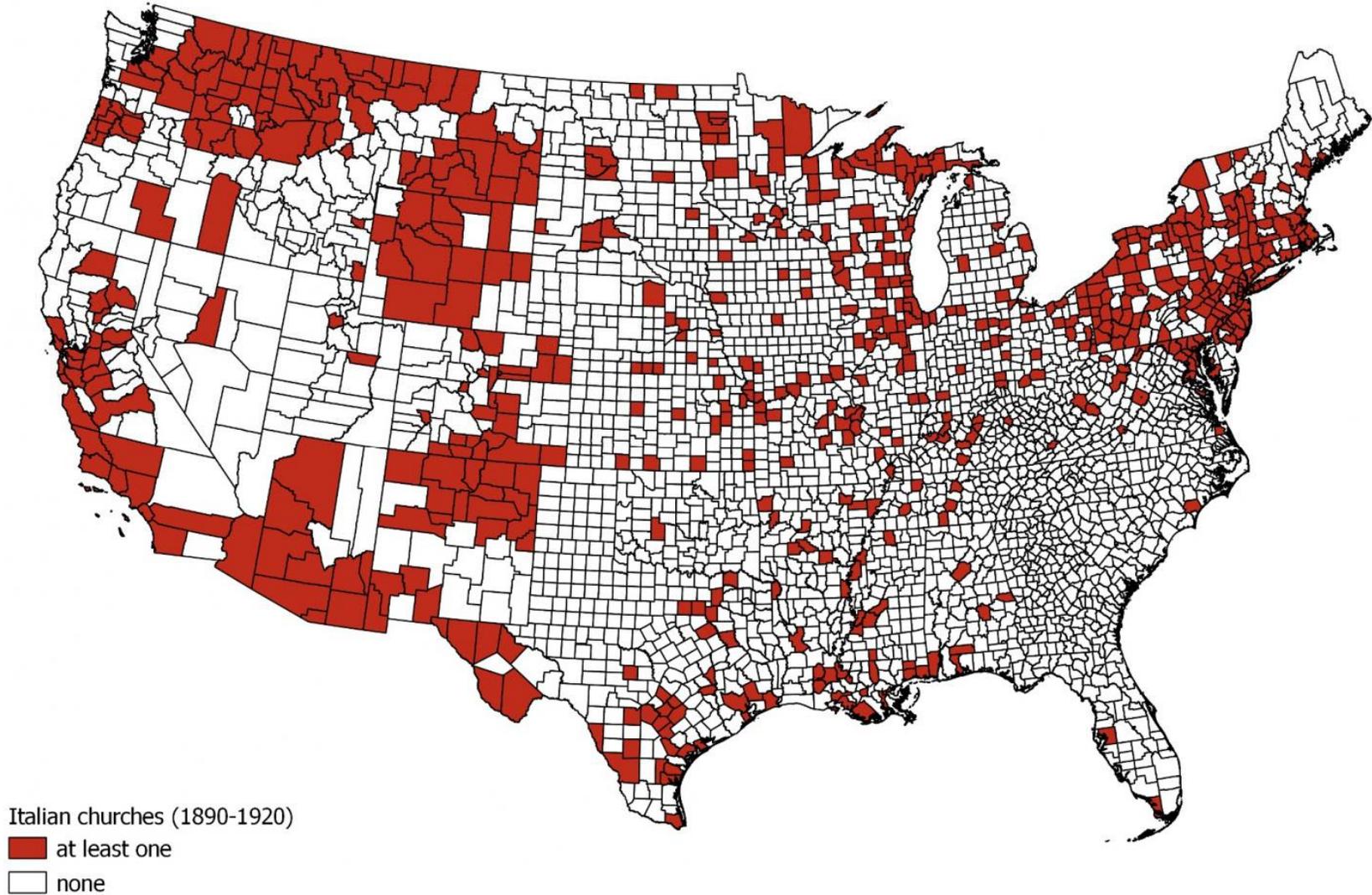
- Steel mills
- Coal mines
- Meatpacking plants

## Established Communities

- Pittsburgh, Penn.
- Buffalo, N.Y.
- Baltimore, Md.
- Milwaukee, Wisc.
- Scranton, Penn.

# Italian Immigrants

- Very few residing in the U.S. prior to 1870
- 1880-1900: 1 million Italians arrived in U.S.
- 1900-1920: more than 4 million came to the U.S.
- Many hoped to return to Italy
- Flocked to larger, industrialized cities
- Competed for jobs with Irish and Polish Catholics as well as Jews



# Italian Catholic Churches 1890-1920

Map from “Faith and Assimilation: Italian Immigrants in the US” by Marco Tabellini & Stefano Galiarducci, CEPR.org

# Italian Immigrants

- Scorned by Irish and German-American priests if they settled in those parishes
- Sometimes required to attend separate masses in church basements
- 1887 – Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, bishop of Piacenza, Italy:
  - Established Missionaries of St. Charles Borromeo
  - Charged with preserving Catholic faith in those who had immigrated

# Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart

- Frances Xavier Cabrini, leader, moved to U.S. in 1889
- Mother Cabrini dedicated her life in U.S. to:
  - Serving Italian immigrants
  - Establishing hospitals, orphanages and schools across the U.S. and South America

# Italian American Catholics

- Their Catholicism reflected their origins and their immigrant experience
- Differed from Irish who invested great authority in the priesthood
- Italian-Americans focused on devotion to family & those who shared in common :
  - Values of the Old World
  - Ordeal of immigrant passage
  - Crowded tenement life
- Patron saints part of the family structure

- St. Francis de Sales**, Vernon st. (Roxbury), Revs. Patrick J. Daly, Timothy J. Whelan, Michael J. Welch. Res. 116 Vernon st.
- St. Francis de Sales'** (Charlestown), Revs. James N. Supple, Michael J. Supple, James J. McNamara, John M. Donovan.
- Gate of Heaven**, 4th and I sts., Revs. Theodore A. Metcalf, Patrick M. O'Connor, Michael F. Murphy, N. J. Merritt. Res. 606 4th st.
- St. Gregory's**, Dorchester av., near Richmond st., Revs. Wm. H. Fitzpatrick, David J. Power. Post-office address, Milton, Mass.
- Holy Trinity (German)**, Shawmut av., Revs. F. X. Nopper, S.J., J. Peter M. Schleuter, S.J., Jos. Krieg, S.J. Res. 21 Lucas st. (in the rear of the church).
- Immaculate Conception**, 761 Harrison av., Rev. Robert Fulton, S.J., rector; Revs. Alph. Charlier, S.J., Henry J. Sandaal, S.J., Francis J. O'Neill, S.J., David C. Daly, S.J., Michael C. Dolan, S.J., Mich. J. Byrnes, S.J., Wm. F. Gregory, S.J., John M. Colgan, S.J., John A. Buckley, S.J., Simon P. Dompieri, S.J. Res. 761 Harrison av.
- St. James'**, Harrison av., near Kneeland st., Revs. Wm. P. McQuaid, Jas. J. O'Brien, John J. Nilan, John W. Galligan, P. H. Billings. Res. Whitmore st.
- St. John the Baptist**, North Bennett st. (Portuguese). Rev. Joseph Theodore de Serpa.
- St. Joseph's**, Chamber st., V. Rev. Wm. Byrne, D.D., V.G.; Revs. Dennis J. Wholey, Thomas L. Flanagan, Edward J. Moriarty, Wm. H. O'Connell. Res. 6 Allen st.
- St. Joseph's (Roxbury)**, Circuit st., Revs. Hugh P. Smyth, James B. Troy, Arthur T. Connolly. Res. — Regent st.
- St. Leonard of Port Maurice**, Prince st. (Italian), Rev. Athanasius da Treppio, O.S.F., rector; Rev. Camillus, O.S.F. Res. 28 Prince st.
- St. Mary's**, Endicott st., Rev. Wm. H. Duncan, S.J., rector; Revs. Michael F. Byrne, S.J., Frederick J. Holland, S.J., Wm. J. Scalan, S.J. Fathers Henry Kavanagh, S.J., Alphonsus Coppens, S.J., and Aloysius Romano attend Deer, Rainsford, and Long Islands. Res. 45 Cooper st.
- St. Mary's**, Star of the Sea, Saratoga st., Revs. Hugh R. O'Donnell, Timothy J. Holland. P.O. address, 588 Bennington st.
- St. Mary's (Charlestown)**, Revs. John W. McMahon, William J. Millerick, Wm. F. Powers. Res. 77 Washington st.
- Most Holy Redeemer**, Maverick and Havre sts., Revs. Lawrence P. McCarthy, Richard L. Walsh, James F. Hamilton. Res. 65 London st.
- Notre Dame des Victoires (French)**, 25 Isabella st., V. Rev. Jos. Forestier, S.M., prov.; Rev. F. Coppin, S.M., rector; Revs. Elphège Godin, S.M., Joseph Theophilus Remy, S.M.
- Our Lady of the Assumption**, Sumner st., Revs. Joseph H. Cassin, Cornelius I. Rior-dan, Jno. J. Garrity. Res. 404 Sumner st.

# Evolution of the Dioceses

# Evolution of the Dioceses

- Current diocese of U.S. derived from a number of colonial-era dioceses
- From the Diocese of Mexico (est. 1530):
  - Diocese of Sonora (est. 1779)
  - Diocese of Both Californias (est. 1840)
  - Diocese of Monterey (est. in 1849)

# Evolution of the Dioceses

French parts of the current U.S., originally part of the Diocese of Quebec



After 1763 transferred to the Diocese of Santiago de Cuba



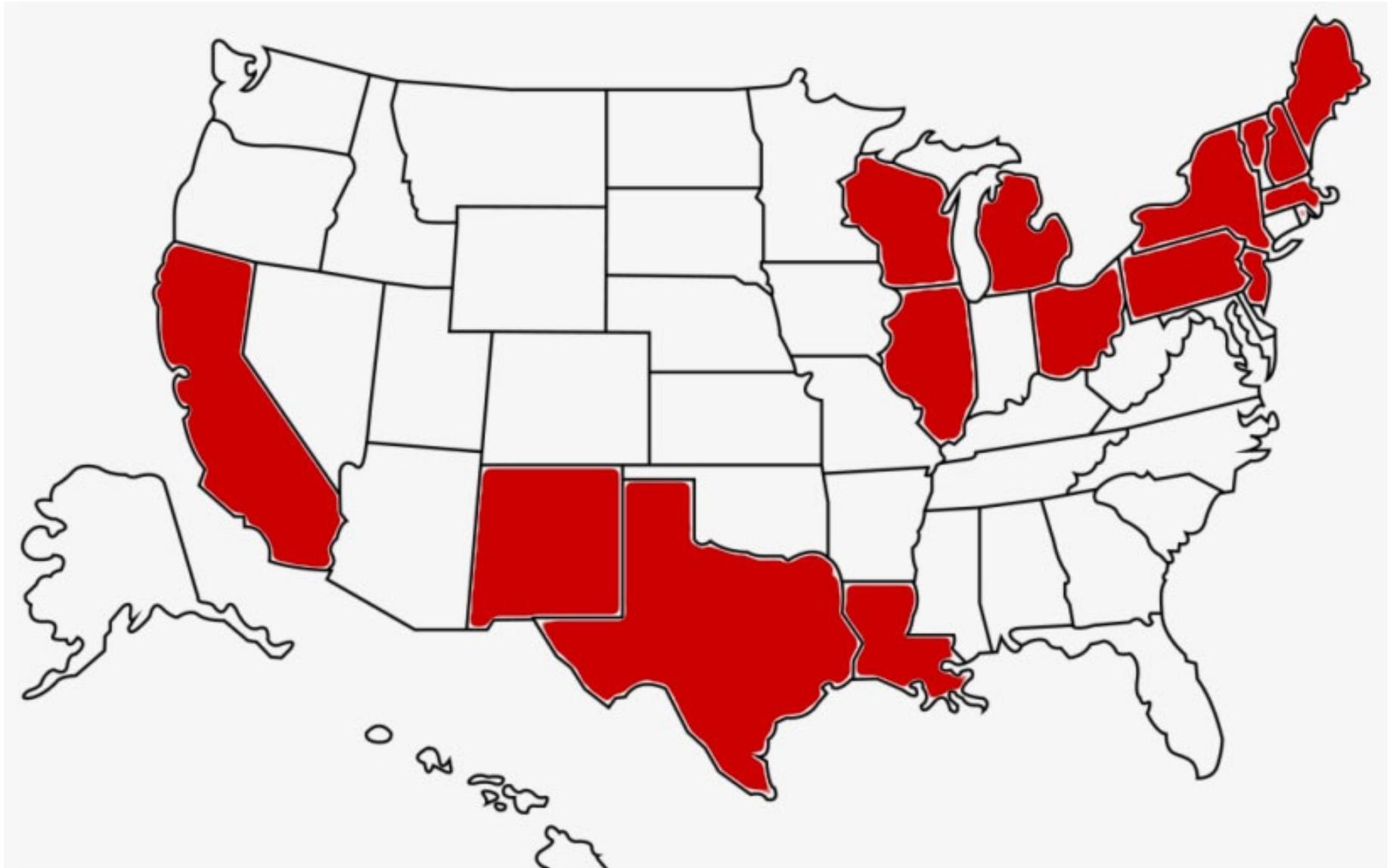
1787 transferred to newly created Diocese of San Cristóbal de la Habana



1793, Diocese of Louisiana and the Floridas created



Later named Diocese of New Orleans



## Dominant Regions

# Catholics in America

- Catholic immigrants were not always accepted
- In the 1700s they were denied religious freedom in New England
- Throughout the 1800s and into the 1900s they often had to deal with hostility from the Protestants in many states
- As of 2018 23% of the U.S. population identified as Catholics



# THANK YOU!

AmericanAncestors.org



NEW ENGLAND HISTORIC  
GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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