

HOW SALISBURY SCHOOL CAME TO BE WHERE IT IS

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IN 1889 George E. Quaile, coming from Ireland, became an assistant master of St. Austin's School, Staten Island, and organist and choirmaster of St. Mary's Church, Castleton, Staten Island; the school and the church were under the rectorship of the Rev. A. G. Mortimer, D.D., who later became Rector of St. Mark's Church, Philadelphia. Dr. Mortimer was succeeded in 1892 by the Rev. G. W. Dumbell, D.D. who retired from the school in 1894 but continued as Rector of St. Mary's Church until 1897. In 1894, George E. Quaile who had been ordained to the diaconate in 1893 and in the following year to the priesthood became headmaster of St. Austin's School and in 1897 he became as well Rector of St. Mary's Church. In 1899 he married the daughter of Mr. M. R. Cook, Bergen Point, N. J.

St. Austin's School was of the order of the present country day school with about 40 resident and 30 day scholars. Situated as it was, in what later became part of greater New York, the conditions were not favorable for the development of a thriving boarding school. Accordingly, early in 1901, it was decided to found a Church school in the real country. Necessary financial backing for a modest start was assured by Mrs. Quaile's father, Mr. M. R. Cook.

The choice of an available site was the first consideration. Instead of visiting this place and that in a haphazard fashion, it was decided to make a list of what ought to be called requisites for an ideal boarding school. At about this time Mr. Quaile was often being treated by the well known throat doctor, Holbrook Curtis, who strongly advised a higher altitude and dryer climate than Staten Island, not only for the patient concerned, but especially for the many boys of future generations who might become attached to the school. Hence, one of the first requisites was altitude which should be free of malarial influences and the plague of the mosquito. The avoidance of making apologies to inquiring parents for

the malaria and mosquitoes of Staten Island was a factor in the choice of the new site. It was decided also to keep away from navigable rivers and from any place that was likely to invite commercial development. On the other hand, a lake was desirable for the pleasure of the boys. As it was in the time when automobile travel was in its infancy, accessibility by railroad was a consideration as was also remoteness, for parents can visit a school too often, and boys are apt to accept more cheerfully a strict rule against weekends when the trip to the city is a long one. A three hour journey by rail was determined upon and with such a radius a circle was drawn on a map with New York City as a centre. There was an inclination to New England because of its prestige as a home of education, and an inclination to the north rather than to other points of the compass for the sake of a vigorous climate with opportunities for winter sports. A glance at the map determined Litchfield County, Connecticut, as the probable home of the new school. A map with much detail of Western Connecticut revealed all the requisites in the region of Lakeville, Salisbury, and Norfolk. It was a natural step to be on the look-out for places in this region advertised in the real estate columns of the newspapers. The first to attract attention was in Chapinville at a distance, as it turned out to be, of three miles from the site finally chosen. Mr. and Mrs. Quaile accompanied the advertiser on a day late in March to Millerton, New York, where a change was made to the Central New England Railroad, and the journey continued in primitive fashion to Chapinville. The thaw had set in and the country road was far from inviting, but the blue hills and the lakes fulfilled every expectation. The advertised place, however, had one virtue if no other. It revealed a hill across the lake which from the moment it was seen cast a spell over the seekers. Mrs. Quaile returned home on the same day. On the other seeker devolved the duty of exploring the alluring hill. He spent the night at the Maple Shade Inn at Salisbury and called on the Rector of the parish, the Rev. J. H. George who had lived in Salisbury for twenty years. He gave a list of mortgaged farms in the town, and in the morning Mr. Quaile

visited first a farm on the hill so admired the day before. He roamed over it long enough to assure himself that it was exactly the place for the new school. Without even attempting to interview the owner, he drove his rented horse and buggy to the bank in Lakeville and made the acquaintance of Mr. Thomas L. Norton, the president. He explained his quest and heard that Mr. Norton was interested in any venture that was for the good of the town. It was true, he heard, that the farm was mortgaged and he heard also that a foreclosure was almost certain a year hence. Mr. Quaile was so impressed with Mr. Norton that he ventured to invite him to return with him to the farm and promised to buy it at the figure set by him. The invitation was accepted by the gentleman who was later found to be the leading citizen of the town. The circumstances were quickly explained to the farmer. Here was a buyer at a price to be fixed by the banker, a price large enough to pay the mortgage and assure him of an equity which would probably not be his a year later. Without Mr. Norton it is doubtful if progress could have been made; with him the transaction was completed in the same afternoon and a site for the school was assured.

It was a farm of about 165 acres with a good farmhouse and tumbled down barns. The farmhouse still stands. Plans for a school of thirty boys were drawn by Mr. W. A. Boring, now Professor Boring, Director of the Architectural School of Columbia University. Mr. and Mrs. Quaile, Mr. Boring, and a party of friends and boys of the school in Staten Island journeyed to Salisbury on Ascension Day of 1901, and with appropriate prayers, the first sod was turned where it was planned to place the altar of the temporary chapel in the basement of the projected building.

So it was that the school found itself two miles from a beautiful New England village, Salisbury, one thousand feet above sea level, free from the suspicion of malaria and almost free from the pest of mosquitoes, forever free from the danger of commercial development, with resources for boys in woods, precipices, and a lake all on the school property. So it was that the buildings, constructed to catch every ray of the sun from dawn to nightfall, command a view not surpassed in

the whole region of the Berkshire Hills. Let those who love the school never cease to give God thanks and praise for this great benediction.

THE NAME

For the first year or so of its life the school bore the name of St. Austin's from the association with the school on Staten Island of which Mr. Quaile was headmaster. It proved wearisome explaining who St. Austin was. As he was so little known in New England it was supposed by some that he was a Roman Catholic. At best it was supposed that the school must be under the auspices of an extreme party of the Episcopal Church. The old name was a burden; the new name, Salisbury School, had the advantage of telling where the school was, and was attractive besides in its suggestiveness of the mother country and the mother church. A church school, as this is, was naturally eager to take a name so rich in historic associations, and eager too, to identify itself by name with its adopted town.

G. E. Q.