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Preface

On an April day in 1789, on the balcony of Federal Hall in New York, George Washington was inaugurated President of the new republic. Among those present on Broadway was a Dominican friar from Ireland, John O'Connell, who was assigned to ministry in Manhattan. He was the first of an unbroken line of Dominican men and women on mission in the United States: friars, sisters, lay members and contemplative nuns who have shaped the history of the Order of Preachers in the new nation and affected the lives of ten generations of Americans. Theirs is an interwoven story which has never been told as a whole. Existing accounts have focused on single branches with little reference to others. In reality, however, there is one Order whose American members have been closely related throughout the years.

For the sake of present and future service to the Church, there is need to know the history of the Dominican family on mission together, beginning in the earliest years of the nation.

For to be Dominican means to say WE. To be Dominican means to be a FAMILY. In so doing we not only offer the Church another model; we find out for ourselves what it means to be Church, what it means to be Christ, what it means to be ourselves.[\[1\]](#)

An integrated study of American Dominican history was first proposed at a conference for Dominican novices and formation directors in 1975. The need for such a study has increased with the movement toward collaboration and closer union among member groups throughout the Order. In response to that movement, and as one of its early manifestations, in 1990 a team of Dominican historians and researchers initiated the study entitled **Project OPUS: A History of the Order of Preachers in the United States**

This project is sponsored by the Dominican Leadership Conference of the United States, the first example of organized collaboration among American Dominicans. Its history goes back to 1935 when the congregations of Dominican Sisters formed the Conference of Major Superiors, joined later by the provinces of friars. OPUS members have owed a continuing debt of gratitude to the DLC officials and member groups of the Dominican Leadership Conference for their encouragement and support

Project OPUS has been made possible by the generous, skillful participation of Dominicans of all branches of the Order in the research, writing and other required services. Many individuals and groups, in addition to members of the Dominican Leadership Conference, have supported them with generous financial assistance.

1. Donald Goergen, O.P., to an assembly of the Province of St. Albert the Great, 1989.

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St. Joseph Province
St. Martin de Porres Province
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PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING PROJECT OPUS

From the beginning the participants have agreed upon three principles as the basis for their research and writing:

1. The history should include all branches of the Order in a single integrated narrative

Branches of the Dominican family have been founded in the United States in the following order: friars in 1805, sisters in 1822, laity before 1865 (date uncertain) and contemplative nuns in 1880. Each foundation has written its own history, recording, along with its growth and difficulties, its contribution to the mission of the Order and the life of the Church. OPUS researchers cannot replace those valuable histories, but only provide a broad, documented record of the Order on mission for two centuries in the United States. Our hope is that this history will strengthen the ties that have bound us from the beginning and contribute to the growing spirit of collaboration among us.

Before 1863, references to Lay Dominicans are very few, although Edward Fenwick sought information about how to establish chapters at the founding of the American province. Individual men and women were received as tertiaries in the 1850's, but no chapters were founded until 1863 at St. Dominic parish in San Francisco. The second chapter was formed in 1865 in the parish of St. Louis Bertrand in Louisville, Kentucky.

Cloistered nuns came to the United States near the end of this period, as shown in Chapters 13, 14 and 15. Their mission required adaptations that led to their becoming active congregations. In 1880 the first foundation of a monastery was made, to be followed soon by others. Their story will be told in Volume II.

2. The American Dominican story should be studied within the context of the nation and the Church.

Dominicans arrived in the United States ten years after the Declaration of Independence. Only in the context of the nation's history, studied by regions, cultures and periods of time, can the story of the Order in the United States be presented as a whole.

The Church, however, is more than context. It is the fabric into which the life of the Order has been woven. When the first diocese was formed in 1790, Dominicans were already present, assisting the nation's one bishop, John Carroll. When the single Diocese of Baltimore was divided into four, an Irish friar was called to be bishop of New York. From that time until 1865 Dominicans were present as bishops or theologians at every provincial council. In 1865, members of the Order were active in eleven dioceses, including those along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, the Canadian border and the Gulf of Mexico. They were forming American "households of the faith" as bishops, pastors, founders of parishes, teachers and preachers.

3. Research and writing should be based on assiduous study of original documents

The primary sources studied by OPUS researchers have included letters, annals and every other kind of record kept by, or relating to, Dominicans in the United States during the period being studied. Copies are kept in the central office of Project OPUS in Chicago, and sources are available for inquirers' further research. They include significant documents found in archives of the Order of Preachers and its American branches; in the Congregation of Propaganda Fide (now Evangelization of Peoples) and Catholic dioceses; and in the following archives.

ARCHIVES AND COLLECTIONS

Symbols	Archives
AAB	Archives, Archdiocese of Baltimore
ACHSR	American Catholic Historical Society Records
AGOP	Archives General, Order of Preachers, Rome
APF	Archives, Congregation of Propaganda Fide, Rome
ASF	Archives, Archdiocese of San Francisco
BBC	Bishop Baraga Collection
CAA	Cincinnati Archdiocesan Archives
CDS	Archives, Columbus Dominican Sisters, OH
CP LILIII	John Carroll Papers
CRS	Catholic Record Society, Columbus, OH
CUA	Catholic University of America Archives, D.C.
DEA	Detroit Archdiocesan Archives
DNA	Diocese of Nashville Archives
DUA	Dubuque Archdiocesan Archives
EDP	Archives, English Dominican Province, Glasgow
FCA	Filson Club Archives, Louisville, KY
GUA	Georgetown Univ. Archives, Jesuit Province, MD
HNP	Archives, Holy Name Province, Oakland, CA
IDP	Irish Dominican Province Archives, Tallaght
KDS	Kentucky Dominican Sisters Archives
LS	Leopoldine Society Archives, Vienna
LVA	Louisville Archdiocesan Archives, KY
MAA	Milwaukee Archdiocesan Archives
MSJ	Mount St. Joseph Archives, Cincinnati, OH
NDS	Archives, Nashville Dominican Sisters
NYA	New York Archdiocesan Archives
PAA	Philadelphia Archdiocesan Archives
QA	Quebec Archdiocesan Archives
RDA	Racine Dominican Archives
SAA	St. Albert Province Archives
SCA	San Clemente Archives, Rome
SDA	Sinsinawa Dominican Archives
SHSW	State Historical Society of Wisconsin
SJP	St. Joseph Province Archives
SLA	St. Louis Archdiocesan Archives
SMNO	St. Mary's, New Orleans Archives
SPF-L, SPF-P	Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Lyon and Paris
SRA	San Rafael CA Dominican Archives
UFL	University of Florida, Gainesville
UNDA	University of Notre Dame Archives
USC	United States Catholic Historical Society
USNA	United States National Archives

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OPUS researchers thank the archivists and curators of the above collections for their generous service. We wish to acknowledge especially the following persons:

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whose study and translation of American documents in the Propaganda Fide Archives, following the work of Anton Debevec, have made them available to OPUS members and other researchers through the Franciscan Calendar.

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and his successors in the Archives of St. Joseph Province, who welcomed us to that bountiful source of American Dominican documents gathered originally by Victor O'Daniel, O.P.

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Archivist of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, for his early interest and prompt response to OPUS needs for historic documents in his care.

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Sharon Sumpter

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We thank these members of our Dominican family for their generosity, judgement, and unique gifts in the making of Volume I: Barbara Beyenka, John Gerlach, Lois Hoh, Justinia Kress, Margaret Mihm, Judy Miller, Luke Tancrell, Carl Trutter, and Mary Woods.

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DOMINICANS AT HOME

IN A YOUNG NATION

Members of Project OPUS who have contributed to this volume of American Dominican history are listed here with the titles of chapters for which they have done major historical research, or writing, or both.

CHAPTERS

1. FRIARS FROM SPAIN PREACHING JUSTICE
Mary Frances Coleman, Ph.D., Universidad de Santo Domingo
2. PREACHERS IN THE SERVICE OF BISHOP JOHN CARROLL
Mary Nona McGreal, Ph.D., Catholic University of America
3. THREE CONTROVERSIAL FRIARS
John Langlois, Ph.D., University of Fribourg
Cecilia Murray, Ph.D., Drew University
Thomas Johnston, MA., Aquinas Institute of Theology
Mary Francis McDonald, Ph.D., Catholic University of America

PROFILE: JOHN CONNOLLY, FIRST BISHOP OF NEW YORK
Anna Donnelly, MA., New York University

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Loretta Petit

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Paschala Noonan, Author, Signadou: History of the Kentucky Dominican Sisters

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15. FROM REGENSBURG TO RACINE: AN ODYSSEY

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FOREWORD

Four Dominican friars from Spain arrived in the Americas in 1510 to preach a Gospel of justice and love to the conquistadors, and one of hope to the natives. One of them was the eloquent Spaniard, Antonio de Montesinos, who with his community at Santo Domingo passionately defended the human rights of the natives and converted to their cause the priest Bartolome de las Casas. Their mission was prelude to that of the Order in the United States; and in fact, Montesinos was the first known friar to arrive on our Atlantic shore, as told in Chapter 1, "Friars from Spain Preaching Justice."

Montesinos and his confreres belonged to a religious order called the Order of Preachers, or Dominicans, whose members had been in existence for nearly three centuries.

Who were the Dominicans?

What brought them to the Americas?

What led members of the Order to establish a mission in the United States at the time the nation was founded?

The Order of Preachers was founded in France in April of 1215 when two men of Toulouse asked to join the preacher Dominic de Guzman of Castile on his mission from the Church. He welcomed them as brothers and gave himself the same title. They and all who followed them by profession had one purpose: to proclaim the Word of God by preaching and teaching, and by the example of their lives. They would sustain that mission by study and contemplation of the Word and by their life in common, as modeled by the early Christians in the Acts of the Apostles.[\[1\]](#) The first friars were sent to towns throughout Europe to teach and preach, beginning in the university cities of Paris and Bologna, Madrid and Oxford.[\[2\]](#)

Before the close of the 13th century, lay persons joined the Dominicans as members of the "Third Order," known today as "Dominican Laity."

Women were members of the Order from its origin. Dominic invited them first to join "The Preaching of Jesus Christ," a group he gathered at Prouille in the south of France in 1206. In the new Order, women formed communities of contemplatives who supported the preaching friars by their monastic life of prayer. Women continue that life today as Nuns of the Order of Preachers.

Dominican friars first came to the Americas from Spain, England, Ireland and France. Their story is told in the chapters of Section 1, "*Preachers from Abroad, 1786 - 1815*" In 1805, Edward Fenwick of Maryland founded the American Dominican province of friars on the Kentucky frontier. Then American women, at the call of the friars, were drawn to an active life in the Order as Dominican Sisters, beginning in Kentucky in 1822, Ohio in 1830, Wisconsin in 1847 and California in 1850.

By the mid-nineteenth century, American friars, sisters and lay Dominicans were established in far-flung posts in the United States. They moved with the itinerant pioneers and "settled in to

serve them by preaching and teaching. They helped the Catholics to build the Church parish by parish in Ohio and Michigan, Wisconsin and Tennessee, and the Mississippi Valley. With equal vigor they followed the hardest pioneers to California and the Pacific coast. Others went east to offer service in Washington, D.C., New York, Connecticut and Rhode Island.

Wherever the first friars went, the sisters went also, to carry out their common mission. A brief review of their foundations and ministry from 1806 to 1865 is found in Section 2, *Americans on Mission Together, 1806 - 1865*.

As the first Dominican friars came from Europe to the United States, so did sisters come from Europe in the mid-nineteenth century. They were assigned from Germany and Ireland to serve the rapidly multiplying immigrants from those countries. Along with others from their homelands, they were pioneers in adapting to the unknown cultures and languages of the new nation. Their contributions to Church and society are described in Section 3, *Immigrants Called by Immigrants, 1853 - 1865*.

Following the Civil War, the formative years of the republic were coming to an end. While Americans would continue to be one nation, they would now be changed for better and for worse by its rapid development. Some citizens were moving from farm to city, some from manual labor to the assembly line. A few would "rise" from poverty to security, and even amass incredible wealth. All were affected by the multitude of inventions which they beheld in wonder and began to use.

During the years 1865 – 1910, as will be seen in Volume II, Dominican men and women would participate in many changes in society and respond to them in new ways. Members of the Province of St. Joseph moved their center of action and government eastward to New York and Washington, D.C. Communities of Dominican sisters who had been attached to the Province adjusted reluctantly to their independence from the jurisdiction of the friars. Lay Dominicans formed their first chapters in the rising cities of New York and Louisville and San Francisco. Women formed new communities of sisters to meet new needs. In this period cloistered nuns established their first monasteries in the United States. While these experiences had an element of newness, they continued to call American members of the Order of Preachers to the original purpose of St. Dominic de Guzman: to praise, to preach, to bless; and to share with others the fruits of their contemplation.

1. See M.H. Vicaire, O.P., *St. Dominic and His Times* (Green Bay, Wisconsin, Alt Publishing Co., 1964). See also Vicaire, *The Apostolic Life* (Chicago, IL, The Priory Press, 1966).

2. On the day of Dominic's death in August of 1221, the friars arrived in England and founded a community of students, preachers and teachers at Oxford. Their black cloaks prompted the people to call them "Blackfriars."

DOMINICAN FOUNDATIONS
IN THE UNITED STATES
1805 – 1862

- 1805-06 Friars of St. Joseph Province, St. Rose Kentucky
- 1822 Sisters of St. Magdalen, Kentucky
(later St. Catharine, Kentucky)
- 1830 Sisters of St. Mary, Somerset, Ohio
(later Columbus, Ohio)
- 1844 Friars of St. Charles Borromeo Province, Sinsinawa, Wisconsin
(affiliated with St. Joseph Province, 1849)
- 1847 Sisters of Sinsinawa, Wisconsin
- 1850 Friars of Holy Name Congregation, Monterey, California
(Holy Name Province, Oakland, California, 1912)
- 1850 Sisters of Monterey, California
(later San Rafael, California)
- 1851 Sisters of St. Agnes, Memphis, Tennessee
(affiliated with St. Catharine, Kentucky, 1888)
- 1853 Sisters of Williamsburg, New York
(later Amityville, New York)
- 1860 Sisters of St. Cecilia, Nashville, Tennessee
- 1860 Sisters of St. Mary; New Orleans, Louisiana
- 1862 Sisters of Racine, Wisconsin