Alexandre Marie Mehault

By:

Larry Gooch
Alexandre Marie Mehault was born at 10 a.m. on June 28, 1843 in the French Breton village of Cossinade. His parents are recorded as Jean and LeRose Herriault Mehault. Church records show he was baptized the next day in the nearby village church of Saint Thurial. His godparents were Pierre and Marie Reine Rose Mace. The priest who performed the sacrament signed as J.F. Bourgeois. It was an ordinary event in a small rural church. But, for some Catholics on the far side of the Atlantic, Mehault’s first sacrament bore the promise of what was to come in building the Catholic Church in the New World.

Nothing is known of his childhood and adolescence in Western France, but it can be assumed he was raised in a devoutly religious family. In the years to come, Mehault would study for the priesthood and as an ordinand (candidate for ordination) at the seminary of the Archdiocese of Rennes. The Archbishop of New Orleans, Jean Marie Odin – himself a native of Ambierle, France – made a return voyage to his homeland to speak to seminarians and acquaint them with the missionary opportunities in South Louisiana. Coming to this “new world,” with its significant French Catholic population of Acadian exiles, was a common appeal used to recruit young French priesthood students. Here, in Louisiana, there already were a number of similarly inclined brethren with even more preparing to make the journey. The recorded histories of Southwest

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1 J.F. Bourgeois, baptism recorded, Church of Saint Thurial, France, June 29, 1843.
Louisiana churches are filled with the names of young missionaries from France, a number of them from Rennes, the capitol of Bretagne.

Mehault faced two obstacles on his path to the priesthood, most notably the lack of funds necessary to pursue and complete his ecclesiastic studies, which he hoped to pursue at the American College at Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. His parents also opposed his leaving, as it meant the virtual loss of their son to a life far distant. It is not known how he overcame his parents’ resistance but it must have been a common experience for local families. *Histoire Missionaire Du Diocese de Rennes*, a book by Joseph Michel, features a telling picture as its cover: “Les Adieux du Missionaire,” depicts a young priest departing to go overseas. He is shown shaking hands with his father while his mother stands aside and weeps. A younger brother stands close to the departing priest’s side.

With the perseverance and skill that came to characterize his life, Mehault overcame both obstacles. He did attend the American College, although his stay was brief. We know some of his method of financing himself as he had written to Monsignor Odin, who, in response, advised Mehault to join the students at the American College. Mehault wrote the school superior at Louvain, requesting the funds necessary for his travel, as well as the provision of a pension to cover room and board at the university once he arrived. Mehault stated he hoped Monsignor Odin would reimburse the university cost.

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5 Woods to Gooch, November 14, 1985.
7 Alexandre Mehault to Monsignor Odin, Le Superieure, December 2, 18xx.
Mehault arrived in Louvain sometime prior February 3, 1865 — a letter from Mehault in Opelousas to Archbishop Odin dated February 4, 1868 confirmed his location. His poor health contributed to some early difficulty adjusting to his new environment. On October 17, 1865, Mehault sailed from Le Havre for Louisiana with a fellow classmate, Yves Rivoallan.

As part of his original plan and prior agreement with the Archbishop the two young missionaries continued and completed their studies in New Orleans at the seminary on Napoleon Avenue. “Alexandre Marie Mehault received tonsure and minor orders at St. Mary church next to the Archbishopic on Chartres Street on December 19, 1867, from Archbishop Odin. In St. Mary’s church Archbishop Odin ordained Mehault to the subdiaconate on December 21, the diaconate on December 26, and the priesthood on December 27.”

Mehault was now a priest, a calling he embraced with missionary zeal. His first parish assignment was at St. Landry Catholic Church in Opelousas, LA. This was the geographic region of Louisiana most in need of priests. There, Mehault served as assistant to Fr. Francois Raymond, an interesting story in itself, as he and his brother Gilbert were both French missionaries. What a loss to their family to have two sons leave the homeland!

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8 Woods to Gooch, November 14, 1985.
10 Mehault to Odin, Louvain, February 3, April 29, and August 8, 1865; Sr. John deNeve to Odin, Louvain, June 14 and October 16, 1865.
11 Liber Ordinationum Dericorum et Sacerdotum pro Diocesi Neo Aureliensi AB Anno 1830 usque AD annum 1930, 18. Father Matthew Dupre, pastor of St. Patrick’s Church of Baton Rouge, provided the translation: “The book of ordinations of clerics and priests of the diocese of New Orleans from the year 1830 until the year 1930.”
“On January 5, 1868 it is recorded that he performed his first baptism.”

This first posting, however, came to be brief. As the Southwest Louisiana region developed there appears to have been nearly constant assigning and reassigning of priests. Church records note multiple name changes of its ministers. Mehault was transferred to Abbeville in December 1868, to serve as assistant to Rev. Theodore Lamy. There, in his new parish, Mehault was reunited with his old shipmate and brother missionary, Yves Rivoallan, who had come to assist Fr. Lamy a few months earlier. Lamy had previously served as pastor of St. Maurice Church in New Orleans.

It can be assumed Lamy was not content to serve Abbeville as a parish pastor because on April 18, 1870 he signed the church register for the last time, and departed Abbeville to join another religious order, the Redemptorist Fathers. As assistant pastor it would have been expected that Mehault be promoted, and, indeed, he was named pastor and served in Abbeville for the remainder of his career.

The young priest was a good horseman, and like Fr. Lamy he was as much at ease on horseback as he was on the altar or pulpit. Unfortunate indeed in those days was the rural priest who couldn’t canter for hours on horseback through chenieres, across marshes and through canebrakes, or take all the back-breaking hours in a gig across unmarked prairies. Such were some of the wearying requirements of those devoted priests who spread the Faith across lower Louisiana. And not the least of these was Pere Mehault.

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12 Goldie Young, Sacramental record, St. Landry Catholic Church, Opelousas, LA, to Larry Gooch, September 9, 1986.
A reference to the hardships of serving a flock is found in the booklet commemorating the dedication of the New Holy Rosary Church, in Kaplan, LA, on January 18, 1955.

Prior to 1896, when Holy Rosary parish was founded by Archbishop LaChappelle of New Orleans, the community of Cossinade (four miles northwest of Kaplan) was served by Father Mehault and his assistants who came by horseback and wagon from Abbeville through the swampy wastes covered by tall yellow march grass (where Kaplan now stands). These early priests said mass “a domicile.”

In the decade and a half prior to Mehault’s arrival, the founder of the church in Abbeville, Abbe Megret, reported to the Archbishop that although his parish, which then included the civil parishes of Lafayette and Vermillion (including Abbeville), was home to a Catholic population of more than 10,000, he had only “about 500 or 600 Easter communions.” Some religious fervor and participation in the sacraments was missing. But, that was soon to be remedied under new leadership.

When Archbishop Odin died while on a visit to his homeland, a new Archbishop was named: Abbe Napoleon Joseph Perche. He must have felt that Mehault was doing a good job as pastor because he promoted the young priest. “He dispatched to Father Mehault letters of appointment as ‘Cure Vermillion.’ On May 16, 1870, Father Mehault signed the records in that capacity for the first time...this began an important pastorate of 29 years at St. Mary Magdalene’s.”

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As the new church leader, Mehault’s actions ranged from an increase in religious energy to a building program. He even made significant financial contributions of his own money to the construction of a new rectory, and furnishings.\(^{20}\)

His ministry and caretaking extended to many of the local Catholics who had probably been underserved. He organized a society for the Negro Catholics and he served as promoter and champion of getting the men of the community back to their religious duties.\(^{21}\) He spearheaded the construction of a new, larger church to meet the needs of a growing community. He even arranged to have an order of nuns, the Sisters of Mount Carmel from New Orleans come to Abbeville and open a school and he provided them with a convent. Today, some 130 years later, the school still exists and is thriving.

“And thus Catholic education came to Abbeville with the opening of the Academy on March 10, 1885, according to Father Mehault’s own entry. Three years later the four Sisters of Mt. Carmel had an enrollment of 40 girls.”\(^{22}\) It was a time immediately following the Civil War, and with a Northern victory and President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation all former slaves were now freemen. Mehault responded to this cultural change. In 1898 he stated in an entry in one of the registers:

I established a free school for the colored. I paid myself the school teachers for two years. Miss Blanche Perret, an aunt of Miss Perret (current times), built an addition to her home to conduct this school...the chancery records disclose that the school in 1897 had an enrollment of 77 girls and in 1898, 81 girls, and in 1899, there were 60 boys and girls. It was discontinued after that, when Father Mehault left.\(^{23}\)

Surely, rural Vermilion parish was a growing, prosperous region, and the Catholic Church with the right local leadership was the engine of change. Who could be more suited to the task than young men who had devotion and dreams to leave their homes and families, cross the Atlantic and take part in building a new world? Who better than those young men who were willing to forsake their familiar cultures and comforts and follow the thread of theology to participate in a new culture of life?

Being a rural agricultural parish the revenue available to Mehault depended solely on the success of each season’s crop. But, his devotion and priestly caretaking never varied. Even as the religious fervor and church attendance of the parishioners cycled up and down, Mehault was steady to his mission.

In May 1896, St. Mary Magdalen parish was legally incorporated as ‘the congregation of St. Mary Magdalen Roman Catholic Church,’ and all of the parochial property was formally transferred by the Archbishop to the new parish corporation. Legally, it had to be documented to verify local church property which presented a difficulty because the Vermilion parish courthouse had been destroyed by fire on April 7, 1885.24

The Archbishop, Rev. Jenssens, had to take on the task.

Mehault’s energetic pastoring continued. In the 1890s Delcambre, Cossinade (or Kaplan), and Bancker, “all three besides Maurice became parish churches.”25 There is an interesting reference to the celebration event of these churches from the publication “Notre Dame du Lac Church, 1897-1972,” by Rev. Edgar Bissonnette and Donald T. Saunier, published by the church in Delcambre, Louisiana. Ms. Mersa Smith, church secretary, provided the following:

The event began with Father Mehault blessing the bell, and a life-size statue of the blessed Virgin Mary (given by Mr. and Mrs. W.C. Faust of

New Orleans), and a beautiful set of candlesticks (given by the ladies where Father Vanderbilt was an assistant at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in New Orleans). At the Mass that followed, one hundred twenty-one children made their first communion… on Saturday morning, Archbishop Jenssens left by train for New Orleans.26

An additional description of this kind of joyful event can be found in the excellent book, History of Cossinade, by Ewell Labry (2007). Few accounts capture the event as vividly as this author’s description:

The day arrived for the dedication of Cossinade’s church. Archbishop Jenssens and the priests left Abbeville early in the morning. When the group was about 2 miles away from Cossinade (probably at Desire’s store) they were met by nearly 30 men, Catholic knights, on horseback. This escort brought the Archbishop and his party to the new church. At Cossinade, a large crowd waited outside the church and the clergy was received with a volley of gun and rifle shots, as a ceremonial gesture. This was an important event in the Grande Prairie. Settlers came from miles around to attend the dedication…. After Mass, the Archbishop commended and congratulated the community and Father Mehault for the construction of such a ‘pretty church.’ At the conclusion of the ceremony, the clergy retired to the ‘new Presbytery’ for lunch (prepared by the members of the community) before returning to Abbeville.27

It is probably difficult for modern day people to grasp the significance of a small rural community having a chapel and church dedicated by an Archbishop from a distant city. Of course, the church served as the center of spirituality, but, moreover, it was a monument, a beacon, to the social lines of the people. It was a gathering place for many human events, not only for children being baptized, marriages solemnized with church blessing, parishioners laid to rest by funerals, but probably the locale of family togetherness and social community union.

The forward to the publication "Notre Dame du Lac," says it very well:

The church is people, people who believe in Christ. Where-ever the believer is, the church is there. The discoverers and explorers of the New World were mostly Catholics. They came with their priests. Where they set foot on firm land, they erected crosses taking possession of new territories in the name of their kings. The Church had come to America to stay and grow.28

The years had passed and so had the youth and physical well being of Alexandre Marie Mehault. By 1899, he was ready to retire and return to his home in France. As is the prescribed process, Mehault sent his formal request of same, now to Archbishop Chappelle in New Orleans.29 His request was granted.

Surely, it must have been a time of sadness for the people of Vermillion parish to have their beloved pastor depart, likely never to return. Mehault must have experienced many of the same emotions, in that for the second time in his life he was leaving loved ones and a comfortable familiar lifestyle. He had achieved his dreams of adolescence. He had been a missionary and, notably, with great success. Mehault was to leave behind a thriving church parish where little had existed before he arrived.

He returned to the land of his birth, the village of Cossinade, in the parish of St. Germaine. Nearby, in the small town of Saint Thurial was the church of his baptism. His priestly devotion apparently continued as illustrated in the church’s stained glass window. It stands today. There is an inscription in the glass that the window was sponsored by "Freres Mehault et Leur families."30 The inscription reads: "Le Pere Mehault, aveyd son

28 Bissonnette and Saunier.
30 Photo of stained glass window. Church of Saint Thurial, France.
cousin Pretre, a offert un vitrail a l’eglise de Saint Thurial, qui porte cette inscription:

Don des Abbes Mehault.”

The sad news of the death of Fr. Mehault was received in Abbeville in May 1904. He died subitement (what today we would call a heart attack) at the field near the village of Bout de Lande.32

Mehault was on horseback when the attack occurred. The love and esteem he had gained in Abbeville was matched by equal regard back in his homeland. The local populace to reveal their esteem of him erected a cross to memorialize his death on the exact spot in a rural field. The cross stands today, on the Route du Goulet.

A descendant of Mehault living in Saint Thurial certified the circumstances of his ancestor’s death and the exact place of burial in the church cemetery of Saint Thurial. He himself, Pierre Chevillard, became a celebrated wood sculptor.

Much of the culture, and lives, and the vibrancy of the church and its congregations throughout lower Louisiana owes its existence to the untiring efforts of this simple man, Alexandre Mehault, missionary of France.

31 Photo of stained glass window. Church of Saint Thurial, France.
32 Pere Jean Hubert to Ancien Eveque de Versailles, Louis Simoneaux, March 21, 1983.
Alexandre Marie Merauld legitimate son of Jean Merauld and Le Rose Herring — born at the village of Conisvage the 23rd of June, one thousand eight hundred forty three at 10 o'clock of the morning baptized the next day — parrain Pierre Mace, and marraine Marie Reine Rose — J. F. Bourgeois

Church Registry

Alexandre Marie Merauld legitimate son of Jean Merauld and Le Rose Herring — born in the village of Conisvage, six hours after eleven and a half, six quarters before, six hours of the morning of the second day, parrain Pierre Mace, marraine Marie Reine Rose — J. F. Bourgeois

Marie Francoise Georges fille legitimate de Jean Georges et de Francoise Gevillonne, née au village de Champaullin, le premier jour du mois de juillet, huit heures de la matinée, baptisée le second jour par le docteur, parrain Jean Marie Bolland, marraine Marie Georges qui signe.

Le soixante huit, mi-temps cent quarante trois, troisième du mariage entre Francoise Leroy et Jeanne Cocault — J. F. Bourgeois

cause Marie, femme de Marie Francois. Pardain fille Louise Poulin legataire de Joseph Poulin et de tenemos hieres, née au village de Conisvage.
HISTOIRE MISSIONNAIRE DU DIOCESE DE RENNES

Les adieux du Missionnaire

ÉDITIONS "ALSATIA" PARIS
« Ordinairement, je pars pour la visite de mon troupeau, tous les dimanches après la messe, ou le lundi matin. Je préviens à l’avance de ma prochaine arrivée, et plusieurs familles se réunissent dans une même ferme ; il en résulte, qu’obligé de les attendre, et ne pouvant dire la messe que vers les onze heures, tous mes jours de mission sont des jours de jeûne. Cette fatigue m’a gêné dans les commencements : maintenant j’y suis fait. Quand j’ai mangé avec ces Braves gens le morceau de porc fumé et le pain de maïs arrosé d’une tasse de café bien noir, je monte à cheval pour me rendre à une autre station, et ainsi, tous les jours jusqu’au jeudi soir, que je rentre à Logansport, afin de donner mes soins à la chrétienté principale.

Voilà ma vie errante, dans laquelle en somme, les consolations passent la mesure des peines. Il est bien vrai qu’en Europe généralement, on ne se figure pas les fatigues et les dangers d’un missionnaire : de plus abondantes aumônes et des prières plus ferventes viendraient à son secours ; mais il est vrai aussi qu’on ne se fait pas une idée des douceurs que N.-S. J.-C. daigne attacher à ces épreuves ; le nombre des ouvriers serait plus grand.

Le nouveau diocèse, grand comme trente-cinq départements français, était de communications très difficiles et habité par des races très diverses : Acadiens, Mexicains, Noirs, gens de couleur... Pour l’administrer, l’évêque disposait de quatre prêtres ! Il dut donc, sans tarder, se constituer un clergé, comme Mgr Bruté l’avait fait à Vincennes. Il se mit aussitôt à l’œuvre, en s’adressant surtout à son diocèse d’origine, et quand il mourut, en 1872, plus de vingt prêtres rennais étaient déjà partis pour la Louisiane. En 1863, six séminaristes, dont l’abbé Rouxel, quittèrent ensemble le Grand Séminaire de Rennes pour cette ancienne colonie française !


En 1889, Mgr Rouxel, de Redon, qui se trouvait en Louisiane depuis trente-six ans déjà, fut sacré évêque titulaire de Curium et auxiliaire de l’archevêque de la Nouvelle-Orléans. Il est mort en 1909.

Les départ de clercs rennais pour les États-Unis n’ont guère cessé qu’en 1910. Les trois évêchés de Louisiane (Nouvelle-Orléans, Natchez, Natchitoches) avaient reçu pour leur part une soixantaine d’apôtres, parmi lesquels nous devons encore signaler Mgr Mahé et Mgr Ménard, du diocèse de Natchez, qui furent honorés de la prélature romaine, et deux autres prélats romains qui, aujour d’hui encore, se dépensent à la Nouvelle-Orléans : Mgr Frain et Mgr Racine.

Une mention spéciale est due aussi à un Cancalais, le P. Girault de la Corognaïs, « l’une des figures les plus pittoresques du clergé américain, le roi sans couronne de tous les habitants des marais de la Louisiane », l’apôtre des chasseurs et des trappeurs, appelé encore par les journaux de la Nouvelle-Orléans « le personnage le plus marquant de
MONSIEUR LE SUPERIOR

MY DESTINATION TO THE MISSIONS OF NEW ORLEANS. I HAVE WRITTEN TO MGR. ODIN,
ARCHBISHOP OF THIS CITY. I HAVE JUST RECEIVED A LETTER OF HIS GRANDHEUR
YESTERDAY 21ST IN WHICH HIS GRANDHEUR PROPOSE TO ME TO GO FINISH MY ECCLESIASTIC
STUDIES AT THE SEMINARY AMERICAN OF LOUVAIN, FINDING THERE IN THIS ESTABLISH-
MENT OTHER STUDENTS THAT HE HAS PLACED. MOREOVER, HE SAID TO ME THAT MY STAY
WON'T BE AT HIS EXPENSE AND (?!) THAT HE KNOWS THAT I AM ENTERED THERE HE
WILL SEND THE VALUE OF MY PENSION.

BUT, I FIND IN EMBARRASMENT, I DO NOT HAVE SOME FUNDS FOR THE VOYAGE, ET MY
PARENTS TO WHICH I DO NOT WANT TO BE RESPONSIBLE ARE IN THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF
FURNISHING THE COST OF THIS LONG TRIP.

Would you respond to me before the 28th December, if you can because I WISH TO RETURN TO LOUVAIN THE 8th
EN JANUARY. IF YOU SEND SOME MONEY -- YOUR LETTER TO THE SUPERIOR
OF THE GRAND SEMINARY OF TOWNES
-- PERHAPS YOU CAN SEND IT
TO ME.

IN HIS FAMILY
AT CASSINAGE
ST. THERAL
ET LE ST. VITALINE

I HAVE THE HOPE TO BE
YOUR DEVOTED STUDENT
WAITING THAT I WILL BE
AT LOUVAIN

A. MEHULT
Me destinant une marche de la
Marche Château pont d'au
Montagnes. J'étais surtout de
Cette ville, je reçois une lettre de ma grand-mère. Hier 21 of
Dans laquelle sa Grand-mère me propose de
Aller dans mes études ecclésiastiques,
Où habite une femme de Lorraine,
Son, me disant que je trouverais dans cet
établissement, belle étudiante qui
à place. De plus il me disait que
une Direction était moins frais,
Que je puisse Comprendre que je suis
désireux d'entrer, il me parle de mon
promener,
Mais je ne trouve rien d'embarras. Je
n'ai pas le temps pour voyager, et mes
groupe d'élèves qui ne sera pas être
à charge, mais alors l'impossible? De
le suivre sans faire ce long voyage.
Dear Mr. Gooch,

These are all the papers I have been able to find. He came from the Diocese of Rennes. As you can see, he was here for a very short time.

Sincerely,

Monsignor Dick Hart (mnz)
McDonnell, John: b. 1869, in Ireland; d. a. Limerick; ent. 1890; ord. 1893; d. ad. Kansas City; d. 1896.
McCahan, Patrick: b. in Ireland; d. a. Armagh; ent. 1871; ord. 1875; d. ad. Newark; d. 1894.
McInerney (MacInerney), Patrick: b. 1876, in Ireland; d. a. Leighlin; ent. 1895; ord. 1898; d. ad. Kansas City; d. 1940.
McKenna, John H.: b. 1868, in Rhode Island; d. a. Providence; ent. 1889; ord. 1893; d. ad. Kansas City; d. 1896.
McManus, John: b. 1839.
McIlhenny (MacIlhenny), Patrick: b. 1866, in Ireland; d. a. Corrigan; ent. 1879; ord. 1882; d. ad. Wichita.
McGahin, Patrick: b. 1875, in Ireland; d. a. Corrigan; ent. 1879; ord. 1882; d. ad. Wichita.
McGillivray, Patrick: b. in Ireland; d. a. Annagh; ent. 1871; ord. 1875; d. ad. Kansas City; d. 1896.
McDonald, Joseph: b. 1858, in Prussia; d. a. Treves; ent. 1879; ord. 1883; d. ad. Alton; d. 1926.
McGill, Dennis: b. 1841, in Ireland; d. a. Louisville; ent. 1897; ord. 1899; d. ad. Louisville; d. 1897.
Meeh, John F.: b. 1860, in Prussia; d. a. Paderborn; ent. 1879; ord. 1883; d. ad. Alton; d. 1926.
Mechura, Anthony: b. 1866, in Moravia; d. a. Olomouc; ent. 1887; ord. 1890; d. ad. Erie; d. 1902.
Mehl, Joseph: priest from Tyrol; ent. 1869; ord. 1871; d. ad. Newark; d. ?
Mertens, Henry: b. 1842, in Luxembourg; d. a. ibid.; ent. 1865; ord. 1866; d. ad. Louisville; d. 1898.
Metzdorf, John: b. 1872, in Prussia; d. a. Treves; ent. 1892; ord. 1895; d. ad. Kansas City; d. 1938.
Mertzl, Joseph D.: b. 1854, in Prussia; d. a. Münster; ent. circ. 1875; ord. 1877; d. ad. Alton; d. ?
Mirula, Charles: b. in Austria; d. a. Olomouc; ent. 1882; ord. 1888; d. ad. Leavenworth.
Minck, Joseph E.: b. 1870, in Indiana; d. a. Louisville; ent. 1897; ord. 1899; d. ad. Louisville; d. ?
Moens, Francis A.: b. 1870, in Belgium; d. a. Ghent; ent. 1892; ord. 1895; d. ad. Nesqually; d. ?
Mohr, Otto: b. 1869, in Bavaria; d. a. Würzburg; ent. 1880; ord. 1883; d. ad. Wichita.
Mortier, Henry F.: b. 1859, in Belgium; d. a. Bruges; ord. 1890; d. ad. Natchez; d. 1933.
Mouthey, Leo: b. 1864, in Belgium; d. a. Namur; later in England; d. ?
Muehlenkamp, John H.: b. 1862, in Prussia; d. a. 1888; ord. 1890; d. ad. St. Louis; d. 1936.
Mudholth, Patrick: b. 1841, in Ireland; d. a. 1864; ord. 1866; d. ad. Hartford; d. 1897.
Mumford, Ferdinand: b. 1870, in Prussia; d. a. 1894; ord. 1897; d. a. Santa Fe, Belleville.
Murphy, Dennis J.: b. 1841, in Ireland; d. a. Ross; d. 1861.
Murphy, Dionysius: b. 1872, in Ireland; from America; d. a. 1894; ord. 1897; d. a. Santa Fe, Belleville.
Murphy, Edward: b. 1841, in Ireland; d. a. Assumption; ent. 1866; ord. in America; d. ad. Boston; d. 1865.
Murphy, James: b. 1839, in Ireland; d. a. Assumption; ent. 1866; ord. in America; d. ad. Boston; d. 1865.
Murphy, William D.: b. 1843, in Pennsylvania; d. a. 1863; ord. 1866; d. ad. America; d. ad. Chicago.
Musiel, Stanislaus: b. 1872, in Poland; d. a. 1894; ord. 1897; d. ad. Harrisburg.
Nau, Joseph M.: b. 1858, in Prussia; d. a. Treves; e...
Mr. Larry Yoch
1200 Addison Thursday South
Suite 209
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806

Dear Mr. Yoch,

The your letter of September 3, 1986, asking for any information. We could give you any information about Father Dehaunt. We have found about him after researching our baptismal and marriage records. That:

On January 5, 1868, he performed his first baptism here and on February 19, 1868, he witnessed his first marriage. His last entry was a baptism on November 9, 1868. He was assistant to Rev. J. F. Raymond who was pastor of St. Landry Church at that time.

We hope the above information will help you in your research. The fee for this research is $10 payable to St. Landry Church.

Sincerely,

St. Landry Church
(Mrs.) Dorothy M. Young
Archivist
Cher Père,

Tu voudras bien excuser mon retard à te répondre.

Dès réception de ta lettre, j'avais téléphoné au Recteur de Saint Thurial (car il y en a un pour le moment : Jean Hubert) pour lui faire part de ta requête et lui demander de regarder et d'interroger de son côté. Il m'avait gentiment promis mais, malgré un nouveau coup de téléphone, je n'ai toujours rien reçu. Je ne désespère pas.

Mais je ne veux plus attendre pour te donner les résultats, bien malgré, de ma propre enquête.

Alexandre Méhaut est né le 28 juin 1843. Je te joins la photocopie de son acte de baptême.

C'est un autre Méhaut, de Saint Thurial également, qui lui est né en 1841. Il s'appelait Marie Joseph Méhaut, fils de Joseph et de Anne Cotto. Il fut ordonné prêtre en 1866 et occupa divers postes dans le diocèse de Rennes. C'était sans doute un parent d'Alexandré.

Quand à Alexandre, celui qui t'intéresse, voici les quelques indications que j'ai pu trouver :

Sur l'Annuaire diocésain de 1905 il figure à la Notice Nécrologique. "Alexandre Méhaut, ancien curé d'Abbeville (Notre Dame), Louisiane, âgé de 61 ans, décédé le 5 mai 1904."

Sur l'annuaire de 1904, Alexandre MEHAUT est prêtre habitué à la paroisse Saint Germain, à Rennes. Il y est bien marqué qu'il est né en 1843, qu'il a été ordonné prêtre en 1867. Il est alors à Saint Germain depuis 1900.


Il est longuement question, comme tu le sais sûrement, de ces missionnaires bretons de Louisiane dans l' "Histoire missionnaire du diocèse de Rennes " par Jh. Michel.

J'attends d'autres renseignements de la part de Jean Hubert, en particulier sur la tombe... Je te transmettrai.

Crois bien à mon très amical souvenir.

Mgr. Louis Simonneaux
Evêque de Versailles.
16 rue Monseigneur-Gibier
78000 Versailles.
Père Bunœuf,

Voici les quelques renseignements que vous me demandiez au sujet du Père Alexandre Marie MEHAULT:

• Une photocopie de son extrait de 

  naissance, civil

• Son extrait de baptême : vous le possédez

• Une photocopie de son image mortuaire

• Le Père Méhault est décédé subitement (on dirait aujourd'hui d'un infarctus) au village de Bout de Lande.

• Une croix a été érigée sur la route du Goulet dans un champ lui appartenant pour rappeler sa mort. Cette croix existe toujours.

• Le Père Méhault, avec son cousin prêtre, a offert un vitrail à l'église de Saint-Thurial, qui porte cette inscription: "Don des abbés Méhault"

• Le Père Méhault a été enterré au cimetière de St Thurial : je pense que sa tombe est à droite du calvaire du cimetière, l'inscription est illisible.

• A St Thurial, un petit cousin du père Méhault est vivant ; il s'appelle Pierre Chevillard, c'est lui qui m'a certifié que le père Méhault a été enterré au cimetière de Saint Thurial.

Voici les «maigres» renseignements que je peux vous donner.

Excusez-moi pour ce retard à vous les fournir.

Croyez à ma sincère amitié.

Jean Hubert
November 14, 1985

Mr. Larry Gooch, MSW, BCSW, AAMFC, CST
1200 Acadian Thruway South, Suite 209
Baton Rouge, LA 70806

Dear Mr. Gooch,

Fr. Alexandre Mehault is listed in our records as a native of St. Thurial; he was born on June 28, 1843. (CAISSE DE RETRAITS, 1878, p. 67)

Alexandre Mehault was at the junior seminary at Saint-Meen-le-Grand when Archbishop Jean Marie Odin made his 1863 journey through France in search of priests and seminarians. Although Mehault wished to join the archbishop, the seminarian's parents objected. (Mehault to Odin, Rennes, May 16, 1864; summary enclosed)

Mehault was at the seminary in Rennes for at least part of 1864. In October, he wrote Odin that he was anxious to come to Louisiana; he had declined an invitation to Port-aux-Prince because he wished to join Odin's diocese. (Mehault to Odin, Rennes, May 16 and October 22, 1864)

Sometime before February 3, 1865, Mehault joined Yves Rivoallan at the seminary in Louvain and the two continued their studies here through October. Mehault had some initial difficulty because of poor health. On October 17, 1865, the two seminarians sailed from Le Havre for Louisiana. (Mehault to Odin, Louvain, February 3, April 29, & August 8, 1865; Fr. John DeNeve to Odin, Louvain, June 14 & October 16, 1865)

In the late 1860s, the archdiocesan seminary was located on Napoleon Avenue next to St. Stephen Church in New Orleans. The seminary was staffed by five Vincentian Fathers under the direction of Fr. A. Verrina in 1866-1867. Our archives contain no records from this seminary.

Alexandre Maria Mehault received tonsure and minor orders at St. Mary Church next to the Archbishopric on Chartres St. on December 19, 1867, from Archbishop Odin. In St. Mary, Archbishop Odin ordained Mehault to the subdiaconate on December 22; the diaconate, on December 26; and the priesthood, on December 27. (LIBER ORDINATIONUM CLERICORUM ET SACERDOTUM PRO DIOCESI NEO-AURELIENSI AB ANNO 1836 USQUE AD ANNUM [1930], p. 18)
Young Father Mehault was apparently first assigned to St. Landry in Opelousas. He wrote to Odin from here on February 4, 1868. (Mehault to Odin, Opelousas, February 4, 1868) The sacramental records of St. Landry Church will provide a more precise picture of when Fr. Mehault arrived in and departed from Opelousas.

I hope this information is helpful to Bishop Simonneaux and yourself. Please convey my personal greetings to His Excellency. As a courtesy to the bishop, all research fees are waived. We would appreciate a copy of your completed research on Fr. Mehault for our collection of priests' biographies.

With cordial best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

Earl C. Woods
Rev. Msgr. Earl C. Woods, Chancellor

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1864
May 16

Méhault, Alexandre
Rennes, (France)

to Archbishop (John Mary Odin, C.M.)
New Orleans, (Louisiana)

Méhault was still in the junior seminary at St. Médan when he learned that (Odin) had come to the seminary at Rennes looking for ordinands to take to the United States. He made up his mind to go but his parents were against it. This year when the Bishop of Port-au-Prince came to recruit, Méhault did not present himself because he wanted to go to (Odin)’s diocese. He repeated his request to his parents who seem a little more in favor. The Archbishop of Rennes has more ordinands than he needs. So Méhault asks (Odin) to answer the questions he asks about the country, the people, what papers he would need, etc.

VI-2-h
A.L.S.(French) 3pp. 4to. 1
Réf. : R 14/2015
Objet : Réponses à votre demande de renseignements.

Monsieur,

Monseigneur Pierre d'Ornellas m'a confié votre demande de recherche.

Cependant, je suis porteur de mauvaises nouvelles. Suite à un accord conservatoire, toutes nos archives du XIXe siècle sont déposées aux Archives départementales d’Ille-et-Vilaine. En outre, les Ordos diocésains (l’équivalent des annuaires diocésains actuels) ne commencent à être réellement précis qu’à partir de 1900. Après étude de ces documents, il est possible d’affirmer que l’Abbé André-Marie MEHAULT n’a pas existé. Cependant, un Alexandre-Marie MEHAULT a été identifié et son cas est intéressant.

L’étude des quelques listes du XIXe siècle qui nous restent concernant les missionnaires donne également beaucoup d’informations intéressantes : D’après cette liste, l’Abbé Alexandre-Marie MEHAULT est né à Saint Thurial en 1843. Malheureusement, le registre de baptême de cette paroisse de cette année ne nous est pas parvenu. Il a été ordonné en 1869. Visiblement, il est parti directement pour les États-Unis et semble avoir fait toute sa carrière ecclésiastique à Abbeville Notre Dame en Louisiane avant de revenir à Cossinade paroisse de Saint Thurial en 1899. Vous trouverez joint à ce courrier son acte de sépulture figurant dans les registres de catholicité de Saint-Thurial ainsi l’avis se trouvant dans l’Ordo. J’espère que cela pourra vous aider.

Dans l’espoir d’en savoir plus sur sa vie, une dernière piste a été étudiée. Il s’agit de la Semaine religieuse du Diocèse de Rennes. Ce périodique avait parfois la bonne idée de publier la nécrologie des prêtres décédés. Là malheureusement ce n’est pas le cas pour Alexandre-Marie MEHAULT. Seul son avis de décès y figure. Vous trouverez également ci-joint sa copie.

Regrettant de ne pouvoir vous aider d’avantage et en espérant que ces informations vous conviendront malgré tout, je vous prie de croire, Monsieur, en mes sincères salutations.

François-Xavier Lemercier.
Archiviste
NOUVELLES DU DIOCESE DE RENNES.

Nous recommandons aux prières des fidèles le repos éternel de l’âme de M. l’abbé Alexandre Méhault, ancien curé d’Abbeville Notre-Dame (Louisiane), pieusement décédé à Saint-Thurial, la semaine du lundi 4 mai dernier, à l’âge de 61 ans.

Un service d’octave en mémoire de M. l’abbé François Regnault, ancien vicaire de La Couyère, sera célébré dans l’église de cette paroisse le mardi 17 mai, à 10 heures 1/2.

Sainte-Croix de Vitré. — Un service en mémoire de M. l’abbé Etienne Alliot, ancien vicaire à Sainte-Croix de Vitré, sera célébré dans l’église de cette paroisse mardi prochain, 17 mai, à 10 heures.

Les parents et amis des vénérés défunts sont priés de considérer le présent avis comme une invitation à y assister.
La Sépulture

Mo: l'abbé
Alexandre Appéault, curé d'Aberville,
A-l'année 1904, le 9 juin du
mois de Mai, le corps de Vénérable et Discret Motte
Alexandre Marie Appéault, ancien missionnaire
aux États-Unis d'Amérique, décédé le 5 Mai au
village de Costinade, à l'âge de 61 ans, a été inhumé
en présence de M. Pierre Appéault, son frère, M. Édouard
Vendry, son neveu et...

F. Labbé

M. Grenet

M. Delahaye

M. Népouze

M. Moulon

M. Népouze

M. Grenet

M. Delahaye

M. Népouze

M. Népouze

M. Moulon

M. Népouze

M. Népouze

M. Moulon
VOUS QUI L'AVEZ CONNU & AIMÉ!

SOUVENez-VOUS DEVANT DIEU

le

M. L'Abbé Alexandre-Marie MÉHAULT
Ancien Missionnaire aux États-Unis
d'Amérique
Né le 1er Juillet 1818 et Vu le 3 Mai 1904
à l'âge de 86 ans.

Sa recompense sera grande parce que Dieu l'a éprouvé par la souffrance. Sag. III. 8.

La bonté de son caractere lui lit de nombreux amis et les nobles sentiments de son cœu lui valurent l'estime de tous.

Ce qui fait l'homme c'est le cœur.

St. Augustin.

J'ai passé des mois bien tristes, des nuits pleines d'angoisses, mais consolez-vous, vous qui m'avez été si chers, je quitte un monde de misère pour un règne de Paix.

Ro.ï. III. 4.

Souvenez-vous Seigneur de son courage dans les épreuves et de sa confiance en vous dans les souffrances.

Il n'est pas perdu il nous a simplement devancés.

Mme E. Prévost - Rennes.
Admitted Jan. 1865; son, legit. son of Éan and Those Hernault born in Assinade, Parish of St. Thurial, 28th June, 1843, baptized 29th — Isle St. Véline, Archdiocese ________ /

2 Jan. 1865, — — — —
D.O. Amer. Sept. — — — —
Saint Mary.
Saint Meen — Isle St. Véline.
20 Jan. 65.
Sept 1865.
Seminery, Archdiocese — N.O.

Died 4 May 1904

Blas. Hernault admitted 4 Jan. 1865

Deo. Joannes et Those Hernault natur.
in Assinade, parochiae St. Thurial, 28th June, 1843 baptized postum de /?/, falleb. ibidem.
Archdiocese Rheodensis / Birmenis/

Nov. Orleans Amer. Sept. ab A. Godf. de Saint Mary


Abente Sept 1865 Domum abiet, ut

parsa Excedium ferte ad Deum iandet

J. C. M. W. 

Obit 4 Mai 1904

S. Howard x 383-9491
ME VOICI.
O BON ET TRÈS DOUX JÉSUS,
prosterne en votre présence.
Je vous prie et vous conjure
avec toute l'ardeur de mon
âme de daigner implanter
dans mon cœur de vifs sen-
nements de foi, d'esperance
et de charité, un vrai repentir
de mes fautes et une très fer-
me volonté de m'en corriger:
tandis qu'avec un grand amour
et une grande douleur je consi-
derai et contemplerai en esprits vos
cinq plaies, ayant devant les
yeux ces paroles que le pro-
phète David vous appliquant déjà en
les mettant dans votre bouche,
à bon Jésus : 
ILS ONT PERCÉ
MES MAINS ET MES PIEDS, ILS
ONT COMPTÉ TOUS MES OS.

Indulgences pleinement applicable aux
âmes du purgatoire pour ceux qui
confessent et ayant commencé récem-
tent cette prière avec dévouement devant une
image de Jésus crucifié et priant aux in-
tentions du Souverain Pasteur.

PIE IX, 31 Juillet 1858

MON JÉSUS
MISÉRICORDE
Church of St. ThuriaI
France
Street-home of Pierre Cheuillard
Bottom inscription of Stain Glass Gift of Freres Mehault
Grave of A.M. Mehault
Bishop of Versailles
Louis Simoneaux in
St. Thurial Church Yard
Gateway to Cemetery

St. Thurial
Pierre Cheuillard
Decedent of
A.M. Mehault Family
St. Thurial