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Courage and Modesty in Plenty: The Life of Madeleine Vinton Goddard Dahlgren

by Donald M. Schlegel

Part 2 (Continued from Vol. XXVI, No. 7)

Mrs. Convers Goddard

On May 31, 1846 Madeleine married Daniel Convers Goddard in Washington before Rev. J. P. Donellan, the same Washington priest who had received Madeleine into the Church. The couple no doubt had met during Madeleine's stays with her Aunt Sarah in Putnam and their fathers apparently were friends.⁹

Convers Goddard, born about 1823, was the eldest son of Zanesville pioneer attorney and militia general Charles Backus Goddard and his wife Harriet Convers, and a grandson of Calvin Goddard, a justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court. He was a native of Zanesville and spent the greater part of his life there. "His high character and manly bearing always rendered him a favorite, wherever known." His parents sent him to Middletown, Connecticut to be educated at the private school of Mr. Isaac Webb. "It was a family school, the number of pupils being restricted to twenty, and great care being exercised to receive only boys of diligence and good character." He became a great friend of another Ohio lad at the school, Rutherford Hayes, who called him "Con."¹⁰ (Hayes, the future president, attended Madeleine's and Convers's wedding in 1846.) After completing

what was then known as a collegiate course, Convers began the study of law in his father's office and completed it at Harvard University. He was admitted to the bar in Muskingum County in 1845 and immediately was appointed a master commissioner for a three year term.¹¹ It is not known where in Zanesville the young couple resided.¹²

Bishop Purcell knew of Madeleine and her conversion. About his hopes for a church in Gallipolis he wrote in the *Catholic Telegraph* of August 24, 1848, "a grand-daughter of one of the oldest of the original French colonists has joined the Church (the daughter of the eminent member of Congress, Mr. Vinton) and a few of the worthy French settlers, or their sons, desire to see a Catholic Church erected."

In 1849 Hon. Thomas Ewing, then Secretary of the new Department of the Interior, perhaps as a favor to Mr. Vinton, invited Goddard to become Chief Clerk of that department. Convers accepted and moved his little family to Washington, D.C. The Goddards' first-born was a daughter, Romaine, born in Ohio in July, 1847. Their only other child was a son, Vinton Austin Goddard, born in the District of Columbia in February, 1850.¹³ Convers remained in the

position at the Interior Department until about July of 1851 when, because of somewhat impaired health, he resigned. He then practiced law before the Supreme Court with his father-in-law.

Convers died on November 10, 1852. His funeral was held at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Washington. He had been "the tenderest of husbands and of fathers, always seeking and finding his highest happiness in the home..."¹⁴

Thus widowed at 27, Madeleine returned to her father's house in Washington and helped support her two children by writing and by translating a variety of political and religious essays from French, Spanish, and Italian. She also earned money by selling short stories and poems to magazines. In 1859 her first book, *Idealities*, a collection of her stories and poems, came out under the name pen-name Corinne. She also used the pen-name Cornelia and had poems and short stories published in the New York *Tablet*.

The year 1861 saw the publication of her translation from French of Comte de Montalembert's *Pius IX. and France in 1849 and 1859*. Written in 1859, in this work Montalembert attacked the partiality of the French empire towards Italy and towards all opponents of the temporal power of the Pope. It won for him the congratulations of Pius IX and the translation won for Madeleine the Pope's blessing.

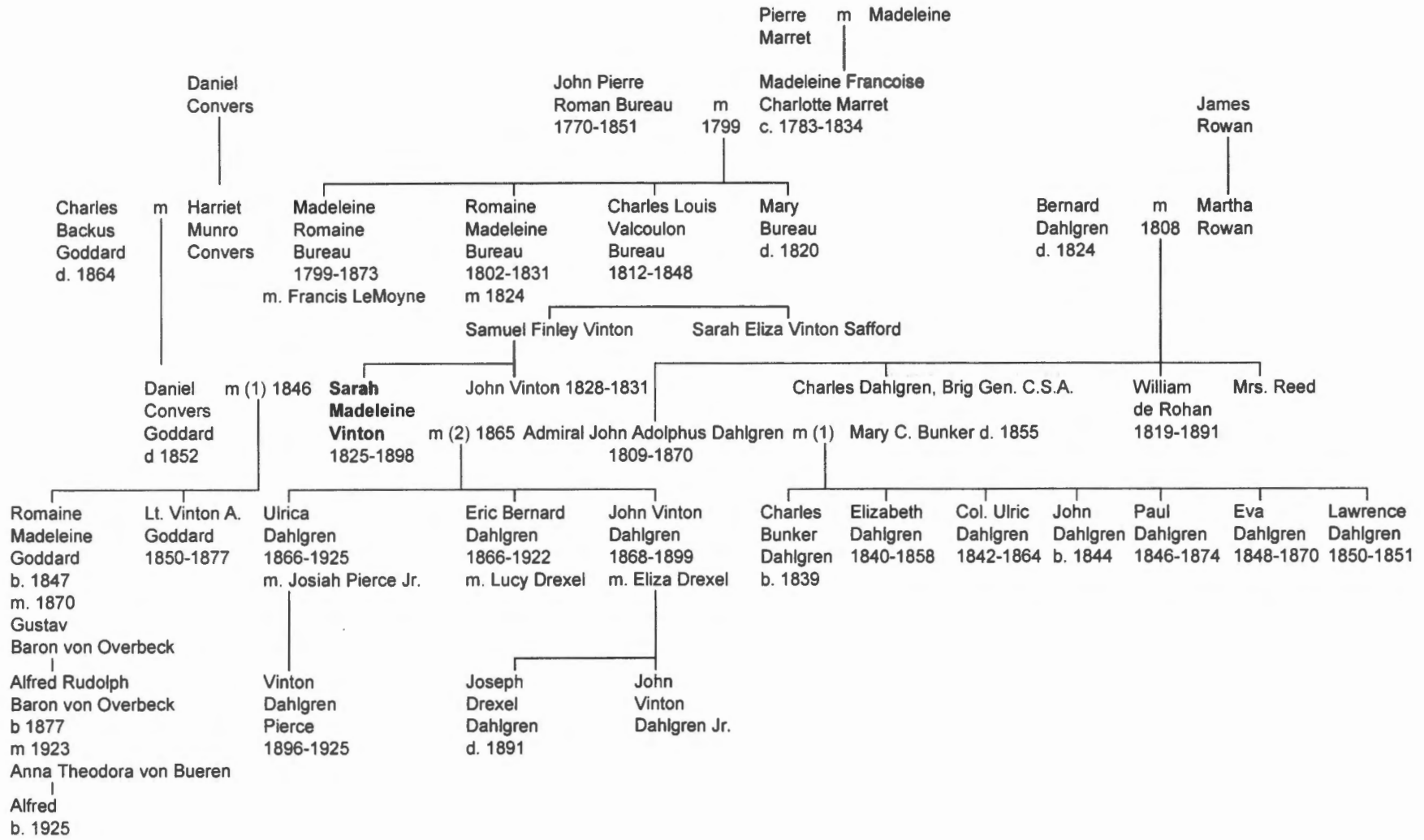
On May 11, 1862 Samuel Vinton died in Washington. His loss was a blow to Madeleine, made all the heavier because he did not die a Catholic.¹⁵ To divert herself from this grief, she threw herself into her work of translating. She had obtained from Orestes Brownson, Catholic editor of the *Review*, a copy of the Spanish work *An Essay on Catholicism, Liberalism and Socialism* by Donoso Cortés. This was an

exposition of the impotence of all human systems of philosophy to solve the problem of human destiny and of the absolute dependence of humanity upon the Catholic Church for its social and political salvation. Her translation of this work was published by Lippencott late in the summer of 1862 and was favored with a kind notice in Brownson's *Review* that October. Madeleine lived in New York City from 1861 until 1863, with the summer of 1862 spent in Cresson, Pennsylvania; she returned to reside in Washington in 1863.

Mrs. Admiral Dahlgren

On August 2, 1865 Madeleine married Rear Admiral John Adolphus Dahlgren in New York City in a private ceremony before Rev. Dr. Jeremiah W. Cummings,¹⁶ pastor of St. Stephen's Catholic church on 29th Street, in the rectory.

Madeleine no doubt had known the Admiral well for many years, from the social circles of the nation's capital. She implies as much in a passage, no doubt added by her to the admiral's memoir of his son Ulric Dahlgren, referring to Christmastime, 1863, when the young army Captain was on leave. "Whenever he happened to be in Washington, his evenings were generally spent at home. Once only did he allow himself to participate in any gay assemblage, and then simply as a mark of respect for the request of a lady, whose exalted worth and refined taste had rendered her friendship, during a long period of time, much prized by the parents. Few would have observed the rather diffident and very young man (for he had not yet attained his majority), who, in the customary suit of black, was quietly but pleasantly looking upon that brilliant scene, and standing aside among the throng of spectators...." Clearly this was written by an eye-witness and a woman, one who already knew the family at that time and noted well the demeanor of young Dahlgren. She also attended



State dinners with President Lincoln and no doubt met many of the elite there.¹⁷

Admiral Dahlgren, called Jack within the family, was of Swedish and Scots-Irish ancestry, a Pennsylvanian by birth and Presbyterian in religion, and was a career Naval officer who during the recent war had commanded the fleet blockading Charleston. He had invented the Dahlgren gun, used with great effect by the U.S. Navy in the Civil War, and has been called the Father of U.S. Naval Ordnance. His chief loyalty was to his beloved country. A widower with three grown children, he was sixteen years Madeleine's senior. Of him she wrote, "to have had his companionship was a blessing, for to the never-failing charm of rare conversational powers, was added the treasure of a gentle and affectionate nature, and a loving and loyal care for all who had claims upon his kindness."¹⁸

The remainder of the summer of 1865 they spent on the Hudson, at Newburgh and West Point. In early November, 1865 obsequies were held in



*Admiral John A. Dahlgren
(1809-1870)*

Washington for Colonel Ulric Dahlgren, son of the Admiral, who had died in the Civil War and at this time was buried in Philadelphia.

The social season of 1866 in Washington, following the privations of the war, was "almost a carnival." Admiral and Mrs. Dahlgren "received" on Saturday evenings. Her gaiety must have been considerably muted, however, for the 41-year old was delivered of twins on Sept 15, 1866. They were baptized by Rev. Charles J. White, pastor of St. Matthew's Catholic Church in Washington, and were named Eric and Ulrica.

In October of 1866 the Admiral made a journey to Ohio on business connected with Madeleine's estate (probably Charles Goddard's estate). He wrote in his diary, "Surprised by a reception at Logan. At Chauncey, the country people fired a salute; but at Logan they had a band out, and great cheering. At Lancaster, crowd and band again."¹⁹

The Navy's official attitude toward the Admiral was the opposite of the public's. In September, 1866 he had been ordered to take command of the South Pacific Squadron. He had objected on the grounds that his tour at the Navy Yard was not over and others were ahead of him for the Pacific duty. However, the "tyranny of official will" had its effect and Madeleine's "distress" was "excessive." The Admiral wanted the Navy to give passage on his flagship to Madeleine, so that he could establish the family at some point on the South Pacific coast. However, despite the facts that the regulations did not prohibit this, and that it had been customary to grant such, and never refused, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, "the old sinner," would not grant permission. In the first days of the Civil War, President Lincoln had inspected the defenses of Washington and visited the Navy Yard, where Dahlgren had been one of only two officers who had not cast his lot with the Confederate States. Lincoln had

become a frequent visitor and Dahlgren's influence with the President had become considerable. This familiarity with the President, as well as with cabinet members and senators, seems to have turned Welles against Dahlgren.²⁰

Madeleine persuaded her father's friend and associate, Hon. Thomas Ewing, to appeal to the Secretary for the desired permission, but Ewing's words carried no weight in this matter. Ewing was able, however, to procure for her a letter authorizing passage for her in any other vessel of war on the Pacific coast.

The Admiral left without her on November 23. She followed with the twins and two nurses, by steamer from New York to Panama, where, having missed the expected connection, they waited for word to come across the isthmus that a ship was available to carry them to Peru. Yellow fever was raging, the babies became ill and Eric was thought to be near death, and Madeleine found relief only in tears and bitter weeping. Soon enough, however, they crossed the isthmus and the U.S. naval ship *Ossipee* took them to the Admiral's base in Callao, Peru. The Admiral settled them in Lima in June, 1867, where they spent over two months. Madeleine was privileged to receive a letter from the Archbishop, which allowed her and some companions to visit the cell where St. Rose died, in the large Dominican convent there.²¹

Early in September, permission for Madeleine to accompany her husband still being wanting (even though the "family of the Secretary are using a United States steamer for pleasure trips from Washington along the coast as far as Boston!"), Madeleine and the children went by mail steamer, and the Admiral by his own ship, to Valparaiso, Chile. There they lived in a rented, British-built house on the Cerro (hill) de la Concepcion where her last child, John Vinton Dahlgren, was born on April 22, 1868.

In May plans were underway for their return. Madeleine received a letter from the wife of the Attorney-General, saying that the Attorney-General had spoken to Secretary Welles about her returning on a Government ship, and that he replied that he "had no objection whatever to her doing so." Madeleine and the children settled in West Point and soon were joined by the Admiral. The Admiral was appointed Chief of the Navy's Bureau of Ordnance and the family moved once again to Washington, with a summer home at Rye, N.Y. Madeleine returned to the social rounds in Washington, her evening parties continuing even through Lent. (These parties were "social reunions" that during Lent replaced dancing parties.) In August of 1869 the Admiral took command of the Navy Yard at Washington. They moved their residence nearby and continued their round of entertainment there.²²

On March 16, 1870, Madeleine's eldest daughter Romaine Goddard married Gustav Baron Von Overbeck from Austria, in Washington. Guests included President Grant, Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase, the Cabinet, foreign ministers, and some friends. The bride's brother Lt. Vinton Goddard was best man. The couple lived in Stuttgart for a time but the "wealthy and enterprising" Baron, also called de Overbeck, in the 1870s was head of the American Trading Company in London, with trading interests and duties in the Far East. He and Romaine were living in Hong Kong in 1875 and in Vienna in the late 1880s.²³

In July of 1870 the Admiral began to show symptoms of heart problems. On the 11th he complained of severe pain and Madeleine, greatly alarmed, sent for a doctor, who upon examination did not think the condition serious. That last evening of his life the couple spent in conversation in his favorite room of their pleasant home. He assured her that she had made him happy and then dwelt upon his religious

convictions, and said that "all his former prejudices against the Roman Catholic Church" were removed, "except concerning one point, ...to which his reason refused assent." That night he was restless with pain. He died after breakfast the next morning, July 12. He has been honored by his country in the names of Dahlgren Hall at the U.S. Naval Academy and Dahlgren, Va., home of the Naval Surface Warfare Center.

(To be continued)

NOTES

- 9) Vinton, John Adams, *The Vinton Memorial...The Descendants of John Vinton of Lynn...*; Boston: S.K. Whipple and Company, 1858; p. 198. Will of Charles B. Goddard, Muskingum Co. Probate Court, estate # 5367. *Zanesville Gazette*, June 3, 1846, p. 3.
- 10) Williams, Charles Richard, ed., *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes*; Columbus: The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1922; I/15, 23-25
- 11) *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Muskingum County, Ohio*; Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1892; 195, 197, 198
- 12) Convers owned only two pieces of property in Zanesville. On October 9, 1823, apparently just after his birth, his grandfather Daniel Convers deeded to him lot number 1 of Convers's Eastern Addition to Zanesville. This was on the north side of Greenwood and east of Underwood, due north of St. Nicholas Church. Madeleine and their children sold this in 1875. The other lot was on the south side of Water Street, just west of Fifth, which Convers purchased in 1843 and Madeleine and their children sold in 1870. (Muskingum Co. Deed Records G/642, 65/421, 3/624, and 53/327)
- 13) *The Vinton Memorial*, p 281. 1850 census.
- 14) *The Vinton Memorial*, p 281. *Daily National Intelligencer*, Nov. 11, 1852. *The Zanesville Courier*, Nov. 10 and 12, 1852.
- 15) Madeleine Vinton Goddard to Orestes A. Brownson, July 4, 1862. University of Notre

Dame Archives.

- 16) *The Gallipolis Dispatch*, Aug. 11, 1865
- 17) *Memoir of Ulric Dahlgren* by his father, Rear-Admiral Dahlgren; Philadelphia: J. B. Lippencot & Co., 1872, 125-126. Dahlgren, Mrs. Madeleine Vinton, *South Sea Sketches, a Narrative*; Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1881; p 53.
- 18) Dahlgren, Madeleine Vinton, *Memorial of John A. Dahlgren*; Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1882; p 171. Engraving of the Admiral, courtesy of the State Library of Ohio.
- 19) *ibid.* pp 623-4
- 20) Andreson, Bern, *By Sea and By River: The Naval History of the Civil War*; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962, p 4.
- 21) *South Sea Sketches*, p 91
- 22) Logan, Mrs. John A., *Reminiscences of a Soldier's Life*; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913; 275, 355, 417.
- 23) *Toledo Blade*, April 15, 1878, p. 2. Muskingum Co Deed Record 65/421. Clipping from the *Evening Star*, October 24, 1889, in Madeleine Vinton Dahlgren scrapbook 1, page 74, Georgetown University Library, Special Collections.



Death of Doctor Arthur Taggart

DR. TAGGART, of New Lexington, one of the best known and highly esteemed residents of Perry County, was killed last week by jumping out of his buggy to escape a runaway team. His funeral took place last Saturday from St. Rose's Church, New Lexington. Rev. Father McKenna officiated and preached the funeral sermon. A number of priests from the neighboring parishes, and a large congregation of other friends, attended his obsequies. The procession that bore his remains to the grave, was a mile and a half long. He leaves a widow and two grown up sons, one a physician, the other a druggist. May his soul rest in peace.

- *Catholic Columbian*, July 13, 1889

**St. Patrick Parish, Clarksville
(Junction City), Perry County
Register of Baptisms, 1835-1847
(Continued, from Vol. XXVI, No. 7)**

1839, continued

July 28 William, son of Patrick Ferguson and Margaret McCabe; spon. John Burns and Ann McGoa--. F. J. H. Clarkson

page 14

Aug. 25 Patrick, son of John Patten and Mary Ward; spon. William Rally and Majory McGonigle. FJHC

same day Magdalen, daughter of Andrew Fisher and Mary Buschean; spon. James ----- and Mary Metzger. FJHC

same day Martin, son of Bernard Kungler and Mary Stark; spon. Peter Kungler and Henrietta Stark. FJHC

Oct. 27 Elizabeth, daughter of Mathew R... [Ring?] and Mary (McNulty); spon. E... McClain and Mary McClain. N. D. Young

..... Jane, daughter of [John] McKhatton and Margaret (McGerrey); [spon.] Mary McGerrey. N. D. Young

page 15

4 [?] Nov. baptized by Dom. [Mrs.?] McQuiglin, John son of John Ferral and ... (formerly Grace); spon. Adam and Grace.

1840

..... [James], son of Daniel [McCann] and Ann (formerly Cassily); spon. Daniel McKiernan and Connelly. N. D. Young

Feb. ... Thomas, son of Thomas ... [Mc]Manamy and Margaret Myres; spon.

Nicholas ...egle and Mary Degle. F. T. Martin

[same day?] Thomas, son of John McGravy and Carr; spon. John Nangle and Bridget Nangle. F. T. Martin

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Feb. 23 Catherine, daughter of Peter Patridge and Rose Quinn; spon. Alexander Clark and Sarah Clark his sister. Fr. Thos. Martin

Feb. 24 Thomas, son of James Galligher and Mary Nangle; spon. Daniel O'Hara and Elizabeth McMullen. F. T. Martin

same day Mary Eleanor, daughter of Daniel McDonnell and Sarah Ann Daugherty; spon. Philip Daugherty and Grace Daugherty. F. T. Martin

same day James, son of John Clark and Ann Donohough; spon. Edward Crosson and Mary OConnor. Fr. T. Martin

page 17

March 22 Charity Ann, daughter of James Clarke and Mary Gordon; spon. Daniel Clarke and Charity Clarke. F. T. Martin

May 24 Heriot Ann, born April 22, daughter of Josua Rinolds and Rose (formerly Clark); spon. Allen Clark and Ann McGravy. N. D. Young, O.P.

July 28 Mary Elizabeth, daughter of John H... [Hall?] and Mary Bushaw; spon. Mrs. Fisher.

[same day?] Susanna J., daughter of John Kinney and Ann McDowel; spon. Gilbert Crosby and Mary Crosby. T. Martin

[same day?] Bridget, daughter of Hugh Murphy and Ann Arkins [Harkins?]; spon. Catherine O'Donnell and Allen Clark. T. Martin

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August 23 William, born the 21st[or 21 days old], son of Nicholas Straglo and Mary Sweeny; spon. Mary Connelly. J. H. Clarkson

September 27 William Patridge, son of William and Margaret (formerly Clark); spon. Daniel O Hara and Mary Ann McCullough. N. D. Young

September 27 Ann, daughter of John Clark Junior and Nelly (formerly Robertson); spon. Robert C... [Curran?]and Margaret Brienn[?]. N. D. Young

October 25 Elizabeth, daughter of Michael Scully and Ann formerly McDonnel, born Oct. 12; spon. Hugh Conolly and Mary Conolly. N. D. Young

October 25 Eleanor, daughter of James Burgoon and Mary formerly Col[?]; spon. John Clark and ---- Clark. N. D. Young

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December 28 John, son of [blank] J. H. Clarkson

1841

January 24 Sarah Ellen (born 4 Dec., 1840), daughter of William Seals and Rose Dougherty; spon. William Hoy and Mary Struggle. J. H. Clarkson

same day Mary Ann (born 25 Dec. 1840), daughter of Patrick McCristian [McCrystal?] and Mary Church; spon. Allen Clark and Charity Clark. J. H. Clarkson

same day Martha (born 22 Dec. 1840), daughter of Gilbert Crosby and Ann Timpany [?]; spon. John Oharra and Mary Clark.

same day Sarah Ann, daughter of William Hoy and Charlotte S... spon. Basil Gordon and Mary McClain. J. H. Clarkson

page 20

January 24, 1841 Thomas Jefferson, son of Michael Curran and Mary Robinson; spon. Patrick Oharra and Mary Kelly. JHC

February 28 Michael (born 24 Feb.), son of Owen Ryan and Mary Gleesen; spon. Thomas Moran and Rose Conly. JHC

same day Silverium [Sylvester?] (age 3 months), son of Sebastian Garaty and Crescentia Rodgars; spon. Marg. Dougherty. JHC

March 28 Thomas (born 19 Dec.), son of Laurence Gilluly and Catharine Kelly; spon. William Kelly and Elizabeth McMullen. JHC

page 21

April 18 James, son of George Whitmore and Elizabeth Hare (born 20 March); spon. Daniel Dymond and Margaret C. Dymond. A. P. Anderson

same day John (born 13 March), son of John Brown and Mary Clark; spon. Henry Aloises and Mary McClain. APA

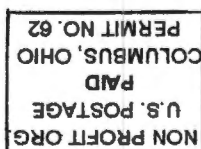
(To be continued)

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