

THE FOUNDER ARRIVES

Words of Msgr. F. F. Peters

PARISH RECORDS:

"In 1905 A.D., on the 22nd of October, I, Reverend F. F. Peters, received the commission from His Grace, Archbishop J. J. Glennon of St. Louis, to come to Dunklin County for the following purpose: To colonize, that is, to induce Catholics to settle upon a body of land bought by a corporation at the head of which is the Archbishop, assisted by his two Vicars General, Very Revs. C. J. S. Hoog and J. J. Connolly, a secretary with an office in St. Louis, and myself as local manager of the colony.

"On the 3rd day of November, 1905, I made my first trip to the Colony, a body of land containing in all 12,500 acres. On this, my first trip, Mr. A. S. Davis of Malden accompanied me. Coming upon the land, as it was pointed out by Mr. Davis, I found it a vast body of timber. Judging the soil by the growth of timber thereon I judged it to be fairly good farming land.

"Continuing on through the woods we came to the famous old town, Paragon, a remnant of a once industrious sawmill town. There were four small box shanties through which the wind played at will, the rain dashed without much hindrance and the sun cast shadows upon the floor.

"There was the old sawmill almost without a covering and the heavy machinery had sunk through the rotted logs into mother earth. With this as a foundation I was to start a new town, a Colony for Catholics. You may perhaps imagine but hardly conceive the ideas crowding themselves upon my mind at this time. That same day I returned to Malden with my connoisseur, saying very little, but thinking and planning rapidly. After a few days of thought I went to St. Louis to report to the Archbishop my findings, which were as follows: 'Your Grace,' said I, 'I have looked over the Colony lands, estimated the future worth and possibilities and I find, in my estimation, that a success as a Colony can be made of it, but it will mean a heavy expense and still heavier labor for me and the Colonists.'

"The reply: 'My dear Father,' said the Archbishop, 'I have asked you to undertake that work because I have found you in my estimation the most fitted and competent priest to do so. I know it will entail work that is not perhaps becoming a priest, yet I would kindly ask you to undertake the work and to reap the benefits as long as you will.'"

Pp. 24f of Sister Teresa, *The Eye, Arm, Spine of the Wilderness: A History of Glennonville, Dunklin County, Missouri, a Colonization Project* (Maple Mount, KY: Mt. St. Joseph Ursuline Convent, 1956).