



Barquilla de la Santa Maria

BULLETIN of the Catholic Record Society -
Diocese of Columbus

Vol. XXI, No. 9

September, 1996

The Catholic College of Columbus

1883-1887

by Donald M. Schlegel

By the second half of the present century the short-lived Catholic College of Columbus seems to have been completely forgotten, until the late Monsignor Herman Mattingly, in an early edition of the *Bulletin*, presented a short article¹ that consisted of directory listings and a few words about each of the institution's three priest-presidents. He closed the little article with the words, "The Catholic Record Society is anxious to have any information about the first Catholic College of Columbus. Data about former students is especially wanted." Now, thanks in part to Monsignor's work in arranging and gathering materials in the Archives of the Diocese of Columbus, we are able to provide a much more complete picture of that early diocesan educational effort, including data on some of the students.

Nature of the College

Colleges in nineteenth century Ohio had student bodies that ranged in age anywhere from eight to twenty-six years of age. The Catholic College of Columbus was no different. Students, boys, have been identified whose ages ranged from ten to at least eighteen years; there were both boarders and day scholars. Since it never developed the

upper levels common in colleges both then and now, in today's parlance we would call this college a boys' academy. It was a direct predecessor of Aquinas and St. Charles high schools in Columbus. Its brief and previously unknown story gives us a new perspective on these two venerable institutions, one still well remembered and the other still existing.

Perspective

Secondary education for young Catholic women was already a reality in Franklin County when the Diocese of Columbus was formed in 1868 and three institutions served this function before the young Catholic men were given such an opportunity. The Dominican Sisters had moved their academy to Franklin County after a disastrous fire in Somerset in 1866 destroyed their buildings, where they had been educating young women, both Catholic and Protestant, since 1830. St. Mary's of the Springs, though somewhat distant for the city girls, given the transportation available at that time, provided a fine Catholic education for its students. The effort devoted to the girls and young women doubled and became more convenient when in 1874 two of the Dominican Sisters, with the

approval of Bishop Rosecrans, broke with St. Mary's of the Springs and opened Sacred Heart convent and academy near the Cathedral in Columbus.² This academy moved to Somerset in 1879 and to Texas in 1882, but by that time a third academy for Catholic girls had opened. In 1875 the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur opened St. Joseph Academy in Columbus, so that by the time the Catholic College opened there already were two Catholic secondary schools for girls in the county.

When Bishop John A. Watterson opened the Columbus Catholic College in the fall of 1883, it was only the second Catholic boarding school for boys in Ohio. The other one was St. Mary's Institute, which had been founded in Dayton in 1850. Having the full support of the Society of Mary, this institute developed and grew through the decades and now is the University of Dayton. The Columbus college, in contrast, had for support only the slim resources of the diocese and it lasted only four academic years, closing in the summer of 1887.

The struggle of the Columbus college is represented by its three presidents, three locations, and three types of school that existed in its short life. Its first president became ill and could not continue; its second, though well qualified as an educator, was more interested in pastoral work; its third seems to have had difficulties in managing the institution and its professors. Its first location was northeast of the Ohio State University, in a large mansion on twenty-five acres. This site was lost when the two-year lease expired. A second, temporary location was provided by the bishop; and the third site, another old house, was smaller than the first but more conveniently located for a greater variety of students, across Broad Street from the Cathedral. Attempts were made at a combined boarding and day school with a classical course; a day-student only classical school; and a night/commercial school, the latter intended to

provide supplemental income to the school as well as educational opportunity for those young men already employed. The college received the full backing of the bishop, as will be indicated in many ways below, and in the end seems to have succumbed to want of financing and a sudden want of a suitable location.

Purpose

Bishop Watterson in 1883 gave a brief statement of the purpose of the college, namely, "to see that the boys were well fed, well kept, and well educated - cultured not only in those matters relating to a literary and scientific education, but in those relating to the soul."³

Boys and young men having no secondary education were exposed to real dangers, both physical and moral. An example of the one and an indication of the other were noted in the pages of the Catholic Columbian while searching for notices of the College.

Boys and young men went to work in industrial settings that were unsafe even for adults. Patrick Kelly, aged 16 and employed by the C.C.C. & L. railroad as a switch light tender, while attending his duties on Friday, July 22, 1887, was run over by the cars and had both of his legs cut off. Doctors amputated both legs, one below the knee and the other above the ankle. The poor fellow suffered greatly until early the next morning, when "our Heavenly Father took him to Himself." He was the second youngest of five sons and three daughters of his widowed mother, and had given "promise of becoming a good man in every respect and to be of great help to his widowed mother."⁴

The spiritual malaise of the uneducated is mildly indicated by these remarks. "At the Cathedral on Sunday at the half-past eight o'clock Mass, when the Bishop was about to read the last Gospel, a

horde of boys and young men, who come late and go away early, stampeded toward the door. But there they encountered Father Fitzgerald, who drove the ill-bred cubs back to their seats. It is an affront to the priest for any member of the congregation to leave before he has finished the Mass and it is an insult to God to turn one's back on Him and His sacrifice in such a hurry."⁵

It was these ills that Bishop Watterson intended to alleviate by means of his college. He expounded more fully on his thoughts and intentions in the speech that he delivered at the 1886 commencement exercises of the college. He had lectured on education in the Grand Opera House in St. Louis the previous week, before an immense audience, and some of his words at the commencement are probably the same that he had spoken there.

He said that the college had shown in the commencement exercises what it was doing towards the training of the boys, but that did not indicate all that the pupils were learning. "They are taught in it, besides, devotion to their God and loyalty to their country, whose flag waves over them and is their protection wherever they may roam. They are instructed to love truth. They are grounded in correct principles. They are trained in uprightness. It requires but a glance at life around us to see that there is much ignorance, darkness and corruption to be cleared away, and this can be done only by the enlightenment of the intellect and banding of the will in the ways of integrity.

"We hold that religion should vitalize all the actions of men, and be the cap that should penetrate and quicken every fibre of their being, their thoughts and words and notions, and make of them useful citizens, honorable members of society, a benefit to themselves and a credit to all their connections. We teach that education should never be divorced from religion, and that all the faculties should be developed -- the soul

sanctified, the intellect expanded, the heart cultivated and the physical being strengthened. This is our theory and our practice. The pagan maxim called for a sound mind in a sound body, but the Christian demand was for sound souls in sound bodies. The education that we considered worthy the name formed Christian men and Christian women, who were the highest ideals of culture, and who in all the changes, conflicts, troubles, exertions, occupations and temptations of life would be true to their religion, their country, their God.

"Parents owe this education to their children, so that they may know adequately what they should do, why and how they should do it, and so make themselves what God wishes them to be. This can be accomplished only by an education not divorced from religion. They should not be separated. God hath joined them together, and what God hath joined together, no man should dare put asunder.

"Everywhere in the world about us we see the evil effects of the separation of education and religion. Why is it that trial by jury is falling into disrepute? the law requires jurymen to be not only intelligent but also persons of sound moral principles; education divorced from religion, however, does not turn out such men and they are not always found when a case is on trial, and the result of their lack of correct principles and the integrity which is the consequence has frequently to be deplored. What makes our laws go unrespected? Why has politics grown vulgar and disreputable, so that the post of honor is now the private station. In spite of our boasted enlightenment and progress, the purity of the ballot box is invaded, bribery and corruption stain the approaches to official position and state in legislative and judicial halls; current literature is becoming more corrupt, the public press is on the down grade in its license, popular amusements are widening the sphere of immorality, the social relations are becoming

more licentious, atheism, naturalism, infidelity, irreligion, materialism, indifferentism are more prevalent than ever before, and the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil are more numerous, more persistent, more trying, and count their victims by larger numbers than at any previous period. If these evils happen in the green wood, what will become of the dry? What can stem the current?" Only a solid Catholic education.⁶

First Personnel

To carry out such an educational program, Bishop Watterson enlisted the remarkable Father Hugh Magevney as first president of the college. In 1883 Magevney was thirty-eight years old. He was a native of Jackson, Tennessee and a cousin of Sister Mary Agnes Magevney, the Dominican Sister who had founded the Sacred Heart Academy in Columbus in 1879, and of Dominican Fathers Michael and Hugh Lilly and Sister Frances Lilly, all of whom had connections with this diocese. Magevney had joined the Society of Jesus in 1864 and was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Purcell in Cincinnati in 1876. He was an educator at heart, serving as professor of ecclesiastical history and sacred eloquence at the Jesuit college at Woodstock, Maryland. He left the Jesuits in March of 1883, about the time he came to Columbus. It is unfortunate that there exist so few records of the diocese for this era, for we do not know if Watterson recruited Magevney specifically for this college presidency, or if Magevney proposed it to the Bishop.

During the college's first academic year, Father Magevney taught the lower grades. He was assisted with the upper levels by John B. Oeinck, a seminarian of the diocese, then a graduate of Mt. St. Mary's College, Emmitsburg, and J. McCann, a graduate of Cleveland Seminary.⁷ Nothing further is heard of McCann, but Oeinck

returned to the college after his ordination, to become its third president.

(To be continued)

NOTES

This article has drawn very heavily on two sources. The first is a box of materials gathered together in the Archives of the Diocese of Columbus by the late Monsignor Herman Mattingly, long after the short article about the college appeared in the May, 1975 *Bulletin*. The second is the microfilms of the *Catholic Columbian*. These films for the years 1885, 1886, and 1887 were made available by the *Catholic Times*. The film for 1884 is owned by the Society. It is unfortunate that no copies of the *Columbian* for 1883, the first year of the college's existence, seem to exist. The college was heavily promoted by the *Columbian* in 1884 and subsequent years and it must have received a great fanfare in those pages during its formative months.

Other archivists have been most gracious in helping to assemble the stories of Fathers Magevney and Larkin, especially Patricia LaPointe at the Memphis and Shelby County Public Library, Ann Krensen at the Diocese of Nashville, Nancy Merz at the Jesuit Missouri Province Archives, and Barbara D. Miles at Mount Saint Mary's College, Emmitsburg. Their particular contributions will be mentioned in the detailed notes.

1) *Bulletin*, Vol. I, No. 5 (May, 1975), pp 29-31

2) See the *Bulletin*, Vol. XVIII (1993), nos. 6, 7, 8, and 10

3) *Columbus Dispatch*, September 17, 1883

4) *Catholic Columbian*, July 30, 1887

5) *Catholic Columbian*, December 26, 1885

6) *ibid.*, July 3, 1886

7) *Columbus Dispatch*, Sept. 17, 1883

Rev. Hugh L. Magevney

Hugh Legare Magevney, who with Bishop Watterson founded the Catholic College of Columbus, was born in Jackson, Tennessee on November 15, 1845, second child and eldest son of John and Susan Magevney. He had two brothers, Rev. Eugene A. Magevney, S.J. and John, who lived in Jackson, and a sister, a member of the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Omaha. His father was a native of Sessiagh, County Fermanagh, Ireland and brother of Eugene Magevney and Catherine (Magevney) Lilly of Memphis. Thus Hugh was a cousin of Sister Mary Agnes Magevney, Fathers Michael and Francis Lilly, and their sister, Sister Frances Lilly, all Dominicans, who had connections with the Diocese of Columbus.

Magevney received his early education from private tutors in Memphis, until his enlistment in the Confederate service at the outbreak of the Civil War. He served with distinction as an aide to General Bedford Forrest. He entered the Society of Jesus on October 17, 1864. He entered St. Louis University and after one year went to Florissant Seminary. Having completed his studies in philosophy, theology, and canon law at the Jesuits' college at Woodstock, Maryland, he was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Purcell in Cincinnati in 1876. He returned to the college at Woodstock as professor of ecclesiastical history and sacred eloquence. After a short term of service at the Jesuit parish of St. Aloysius in Washington, D.C., the scanty records of the Jesuits indicate that he left their order on March 19, 1883, shortly before he came to Columbus.¹

In the early 1880s he achieved notice as a speaker of great ability in a series of lectures given at St. Xavier Church in Cincinnati. There and subsequently in New York City and Washington,



Rev. Hugh L. Magevney

(copyright reserved by
Jesuit Missouri Province Archives)

D.C., and throughout the rest of his life, his career was one of marked brilliance in preaching and teaching the word of God. "His masterful exposition of Catholic faith and doctrine presented in matchless eloquence and logically and convincingly propounded, brought many noted converts into the true fold."²

His first assignment in Columbus may have been as chaplain at the Ohio Penitentiary, where his service filled the gap between the chaplaincies of Fathers Dennis Clarke and Thomas Delaney.³ Bishop Watterson and he established the college, the bishop apparently supplying much of the inspiration and the priest the knowledge of college finance and operation. In this Watterson should not have been lacking, having been

president of Mt. St. Mary's, Emmitsburg, before being named Bishop of Columbus, but a comparison of the tenures of the three presidents of the Catholic College of Columbus shows that Magevney's was the most organized from an administrative standpoint. He seems to have known exactly what facilities were needed; and he obtained enough students with appropriate levels of tuition, room, and board to make a financial success of the fledgling institution. While a good organizer and administrator, Father Magevney never lost sight of the true goal of Catholic education. The following lines are excerpted from his lecture, "The Holiness of the Church in Her Schools".

Intellectual and physical development are always good; but at best they are always secondary. Neither of them nor both of them together can ever take man to the end for which he was created, and neither Christ nor His Church ever had such a thought as that of promoting man's temporal welfare at the cost of his welfare eternal, or of making of mankind a successful body of time-servers at the risk of losing the kingdom of heaven. A system of morality in Christian education is as necessary as the belief in the divinity of Christ is necessary in the Christian religion.

Magevney became ill in the spring of 1884 (no hint is given of the nature of his illness) and he gave up the "onerous duties" of his position at the college about May 19,⁴ to recuperate in a hospital. By July 5 the editor of the *Catholic Columbian* was able to remark, "We are glad to say that Father Magevney has sufficiently recovered from his illness as to be able to circulate among his friends. Everybody is glad to see him about again."

He spent some time visiting his relatives and in speaking engagements before returning to priestly duties. He was visiting his brother John in Jackson, Tennessee in October, 1884, and in January, 1885 he gave a lecture in Memphis on "Catholic Education."⁵

By 1886 he had returned to a career in Catholic education, becoming a professor in the Jesuit College of the Sacred Heart, at Morrison, near Denver, Colorado.⁶ His subsequent career has been traced in the annual Catholic Directory : from 1886 to 1888 he remained at Sacred Heart College, Morrison, Colorado. From 1890 to 1895 he was listed at the College of the Sacred Heart in Denver. In 1896 and 1897 he was at St. Andrew's Cathedral in Little Rock, with Bishop Edward Fitzgerald, formerly of Columbus. In 1898 he was at Fayetteville, Arkansas, with a mission at Eureka Springs, Carroll County.

About 1900 he returned to the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and his first service was in Marysville, now in the Diocese of Columbus. He then was stationed at the Cathedral in Cincinnati, until May of 1905, when his fatal illness struck. He retired to a private home in Mt. Auburn and there was prevailed upon to prepare a manuscript of many of his lectures and poems, which was published in Cincinnati as *A Legacy of Lectures and Verses* in 1906. (The Josephinum library has a copy.) He died on May 2, 1908 and, after a funeral at St. Peter Cathedral, was buried at St. Joseph Cemetery, Cincinnati.

NOTES

- 1) Data supplied by Nancy Merz, Associate Archivist, Jesuit Missouri Province Archives; and *Catholic Telegraph*, May 8, 1908. "Notes on the Lilly Family of Memphis, Tennessee" by John I. Coddington, in the 1946 *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* (with thanks to Sr. Mary Agnes McMahan of St. Mary of the Springs for the reference)
- 2) *Catholic Telegraph*, May 8, 1908
- 3) *Catholic Columbian*, Jan. 29, 1884
- 4) *Columbus Daily Times*, May 19, 1884, p. 1; *Catholic Columbian*, May 31, 1884
- 5) *Catholic Columbian*, Oct. 25, 1884 and Jan. 24, 1885
- 6) *ibid.*, Feb. 6, 1886

Students of the Catholic College of Columbus

The names of some sixty students of the Catholic College of Columbus have been found. Some of these are in *Catholic Columbian* notices of commencements and other events. The dates of these issues are March 23, 1884, July 3, 1886, and July 2, 1887. Others names are listed on a packet of receipt stubs that is filed in the diocesan Archives. (These apparently were preserved as evidence during a controversy between Father Oeinck and one of the professors he had hired.) Some of the names are well known, others are obscure. Many of the students were from Columbus and are easily identified; others seem to have been from elsewhere in the diocese or beyond its boundaries and no further information on these can be located. The leading student, from the point of view of identity and association with the school, was Joe Egan, son of Pat Egan of Columbus, who was the only student whom we know to have attended the college for all four years of its existence. A fairly complete sketch of Mr. Egan will be given, while for others only some identifying remarks or only a name can be provided.

Blermann, Francis is mentioned in the July 3, 1886 *Columbian*. The name should be Biermann and this is Frank, the only son of widow Louisa Biermann of Summit Street in Columbus. He was born about 1871 and is listed in the 1891 city directory as a laborer.

Byrne, Eugene is mentioned in the 1884 *Columbian*.

Coady, J. was in the junior department, according to the 1887 *Columbian*; on Feb. 9, 1887, \$15 tuition was paid for ---- Coady. This probably is either John, son of Edmond Cody, or Joseph, son of Martin Coady, both of Columbus, both of whom were born about 1876.

Devlin, Willie was the "littlest tot of the school" according to the 1884 *Columbian*.

Dewey, John was in the junior department according to the 1887 *Columbian*.

Dundon, James and John. On Oct. 29, 1886, \$20 tuition was paid for the first quarter for these two brothers and on Feb. 3, 1887, \$20 tuition was paid, apparently by their father, John Dundon. The family lived on Mt. Vernon Avenue in Columbus and James in 1891 was a clerk for

Dundon & Bergin. John Dundon, James's older brother, was born in 1862 and was almost too old to have attended the college; it may be that their younger brother William, born about 1875, and not John was the student at the college.

Egan, Joseph, son of prominent Columbusite Patrick Egan, was born in 1871. He was quite musically talented, as mentioned in the *Columbian* in 1884, 1886, and 1887. He was a man of books, always a student, and from his boyhood a lover of Shakespeare. After the Columbus Catholic College closed, he attended Niagara College and University, where he was graduated in 1890. He returned there to study for the priesthood, but the deaths of his father and brother forced him to return to Columbus to run the family undertaking business. He continued his intellectual achievements, gave wide study to many subjects, and gave lectures at the different churches, schools, and reading circles in his native city. "His charities were numerous and unobtrusive and his kindness to friends and relatives constant and unailing... Like his father he held an unique place in the hearts of the Catholic people who knew and loved him, and no one will be found to take the vacant place." He died in 1912. (*Catholic Columbian*, July 5, 1912)

Fitspatrick, John paid \$3 on Jan. 17, 1887 for January tuition for the night school.

Ford, Michael paid \$3 on Jan. 17, 1887 for one month tuition for the night school.

Frison, J. paid \$3 on account on Jan. 26, 1887.

Hanavin, William is mentioned in the 1984 *Columbian* account. He was born about 1869, son of Patrick Hanivan, a commission merchant of East Town Street in Columbus. 1891 found him a bookkeeper at Green, Joyce & Company.

Hayden?, Mrs. paid \$3 night school tuition for January on Jan. 17, 1887. This appears to be the widow Hayden of St. Patrick parish, who had a son names James.

Hayes, James paid \$10 tuition on Feb. 7, 1887.

Hayes, John was in the preparatory department, according to the 1886 *Columbian*.

Hinterschied, Cornelius was in the commercial department according to the 1886 *Columbian*. He was born in 1871, youngest son of Martin Hinterschied, a member of Holy Cross parish. In the 1890s he was a clerk at the establishment of his cousin, M. Theado & Co.

Howard, Joseph is mentioned in the 1884 and 1887 *Catholic Columbian*. He, like Joe Egan, may have attended all four years of the college but we are missing any record for 1885 and 1886. He was born in 1870, a son of Francis and

Catherine Howard. He was brother-in-law of Father Matt Smith of this diocese, brother of Bishop Howard of Covington, and father of Monsignor Matthew A. Howard.

Irvin, Arthur was in the Preparatory Dept. in 1886, according to the *Columbian*. The name is Irwin. He was born about 1873, son of Lawrence Irwin, a locomotive engineer. In the 1890s Arthur was a clerk. He became a mechanic for the Pennsylvania Railroad and died in 1931, leaving a son and a daughter.

Irwin, Lawrence on Oct. 27, 1886, paid \$10 on account. It is not clear whether this was Arthur's father, paying tuition for Arthur, or whether it might be Arthur's brother, Lawrence jr.

Irwin, S. was in the junior dept. according to the 1887 *Columbian*. This was Sylvester, born about 1875, youngest son of Arthur's uncle William Irwin, and the only child of the family who received any secondary education. He was a machine hand in the 1890s and later owned a bar on North High Street. He died in 1946. (With thanks to Mrs. Logsdon and her sister, who are kin of the Irwins.)

Jacobs, Edward is mentioned in the 1884 *Columbian*. This is probably the Edward Jacobs who was born about 1870, son of George Eugene Jacobs, and grandson of John Jacobs from Erbesbüdesheim (for whom see the *Bulletin*, Vol. X, No. 2 (February, 1985)).

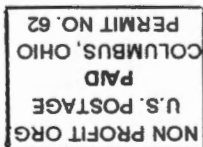
(To be continued)

Catholic Record Society -- Diocese of Columbus

197 E. Gay Street

Columbus, Ohio 43215

Donald M. Schlegel, editor



CHANCERY OFFICE
DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS
198 E. BROAD STREET
COLUMBUS OH 43215