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# JESUIT HIGHER EDUCATION IN NEW JERSEY, 1899-1900: SAINT PETER'S COLLEGE

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*The Society of Jesus (Jesuits) has made inestimable contributions to the development of Catholic education in the United States. This article provides a historical overview of one venerable Jesuit institution, Saint Peter's College in New Jersey, the only Jesuit-operated institution of higher learning in the state. Special attention is given to the Ratio Studiorum and to other details of the delivery of Jesuit education circa 1900.*

**A**d *Majorem Dei Gloriam*, "For God's Greater Glory," is a maxim that defines the highest ideals of intellectual attainment and spiritual enlightenment advanced within the educational mission of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). The *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* principle has served as the basic tenet associated with all Jesuit-sponsored educational institutions over the past five centuries, and as a result it emerged as the first motto of Saint Peter's, the Jesuit College of New Jersey. Chartered in 1872, Saint Peter's observed its 21st anniversary as a fully functioning organization in 1899. This small school in Jersey City quickly became a center of learning dedicated to establishing and advancing the ideals of Catholic higher education within a multicultural American society. However, the 1899-1900 school year shadowed an era when the enlarging immigrant population in particular and the Catholic system of education in general were held under close scrutiny by various conservative elements in the mainstream of American society. Therefore, since Saint Peter's represented the embodiment of Jesuit scholarship (arguably the most prolific style of Catholic instruction), the school's development during this time period is representative of other religious institutions and how they were acclaimed or critically received.

As did many other religiously oriented colleges of the day, Saint Peter's originated as a combination preparatory school and undergraduate academy.

During the late 19th century, an increased awareness of educational opportunities in Catholic schools steadily took hold among potential students who saw a diploma as the means of achieving better employment and financial opportunities. A diminutive but growing alumni base which consisted of teachers, lawyers, clergy, and other professionals, combined with promotion through the local press, helped to enhance the visibility and reputation of Saint Peter's. For example, the hometown *Jersey City News* ran an article in 1899 that complimented the school:

If our fellow citizens understand and value at its proper merit the benefit of a classical education in a university such as is offered at this seat of teaching in our city, they will surely take advantage of the opportunity to give their sons that intellectual training which will enable them to enter the highest echelons of society and be a credit and honor both to their parents and to their country. (*Jesuit Diary*, 1899)

This particular piece which noted the benefits and opportunities of a classical education not only echoed objectives associated with the byproduct of Catholic education from a commercial standpoint, but also represented the Jesuit concept of total personal development which became the Order's principal measure of "credit and honor" within society as a whole.

This article is organized into four sections: 1) the evolution of Jesuit education, including the contribution of the founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius of Loyola; 2) an overview of Jesuit teaching style; 3) Jesuit influence in New Jersey; and 4) American Jesuit education around 1900 as it was delivered at Saint Peter's College.

## **IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA AND THE EVOLUTION OF JESUIT EDUCATION**

The basic hallmark of a traditional education advocated by the Catholic Church, which the Society of Jesus cultivated from its foundation, was a God-centered, humanities-edged approach to intellectual development. Since this became a focal point from which Jesuit teachers could draw inspiration, the molding of a student's mind and moral values became a duty not taken lightly.

God and man's duties to God are considered of sufficient importance to earn a prominent place in the Jesuit school. And here the Jesuit educator does not rest content with knowledge; right habits of conduct must also be acquired. The Jesuit theory of education has always been that mind training is not its exclusive function. Their schools consciously attempt to train the will. This does not mean merely pious practices. The Jesuit strives to inculcate in the boys under his charge a sense of the tremendous importance and the intense reality of religion. (McGucken, 1932, pp. 267-268)

Thus, the framework of Catholic education in basic terms involved the total education of an individual, which came from God, and served as a catalyst for the workings of the earliest Jesuits in all fields of endeavor, both temporal and religious.

The Society of Jesus came into existence through the efforts of Ignatius of Loyola, founder and guiding force behind the Order during its initial stage of formation in 1540. St. Ignatius is not only credited as a loyal defender of the faith in spiritual matters, he also helped to devise a series of five unique principles upon which the Jesuits have based the foundation of their educational mission from earliest trials through the modern age. A strongly rooted liberal arts curriculum which revolved around lessons in grammar, rhetoric, arts (philosophy, mathematics, etc.), theology, and the humanities made up the core principles initially endorsed by St. Ignatius. Thereafter, each of these disciplines was taught in a manner where constant repetition, persistence, and presence became the means by which knowledge was acquired and used by the student community (Farrell, 1938).

Written evidence detailing a specialized plan of study is alluded to in Ignatius' major work titled *The Spiritual Exercises* (and related documents), but the primary Jesuit system of education associated with grammar through college-level achievement has been based on the *Ratio Studiorum* or "Plan of Studies" outline. This primer centered on bringing order and standardization to the teaching of theology, philosophy, and related subject matters (Schwickerath, 1903). Although the first draft of this rule was completed in 1541, revisions were made to the original text in 1551, 1586, 1592, 1599, and 1832. Eventually, the 1599 *Ratio* emerged as the standard version favored among American Jesuits, even though this document is more a reflection of methodological approach rather than an introduction to diverse educational theories.

The general aim was the harmonious development of intellect and will, of mind and spirit, so as to prepare educated apostles of Christ's kingdom on earth. The special aim set the goal of the humanistic, philosophical, and theological disciplines. To take only the Humanities, their goal was that *eloquentia perfecta* which to the Jesuits as to the Renaissance educators meant the union of knowledge and eloquence, or the right use of reason joined to cultivated expression. Each grade of the humanistic course contributed its proper measure of advance toward this goal. (Farrell, 1938, pp. 355-356)

This standard established by the Society of Jesus was designed not only to promote scholarship, but to develop well-rounded individuals in the process.

As noted previously, a prototypical Catholic education involved complete immersion in academic fields such as Latin, Greek, theology, and philosophy. Latin in particular became the main subject taught in all Jesuit-oper-

ated American high schools and colleges, since an understanding of the Church's official language fostered a better understanding of the Church itself. Distinctive disciplines that are more proactive in terms of content, including history, science, business, literature, and English, were praised for their practical value, but always considered secondary in importance when compared to the mastery of classical languages (McGucken, 1932). Jesuit colleges thus became virtual carbon copies of each other in matters of curriculum development, and these institutions typically arranged their respective academic years according to the following fixed sequence of events:

**LOWER GRAMMAR**—The aim of this class is a perfect knowledge of the rudiments and elementary knowledge of the syntax. In Greek: reading, writing, and a certain portion of the grammar. **MIDDLE GRAMMAR**—The aim is a knowledge, though not entire, of all grammar; and, for the prelection, only the select epistles, narrations, descriptions and the like from Cicero, with the *Commentaries* of Caesar, and some of the easiest poems of Ovid. **UPPER GRAMMAR**—The aim is a complete knowledge of grammar, including all the exceptions and idioms in syntax, figures and rhetoric, and the art of versification. In Greek: the eight parts of speech, or all the rudiments. **HUMANITIES**—The aim is to prepare, as it were, the ground for eloquence, which is done in three ways: by a knowledge of the language, some erudition, and a sketch of the precepts pertaining to rhetoric. **RHETORIC**—The grade of this class cannot be easily defined. For it trains to perfect eloquence, which comprises two great faculties, the oratorical and the poetical. (Schwickerath, 1903, p. 20)

In order to maintain this master plan, the Jesuit brand of education is one in which the course work was designed to be thorough (solid), prolonged (long), general (nonspecialized), liberal (humanistic), and simplistic (fewer subjects) when put into actual practice (Schwickerath, 1903).

## **JESUIT TEACHING STYLE AND METHODOLOGY**

Jesuit priests who became school instructors were considered living models of educational attainment, and as a consequence, they were expected to transfer lessons mastered beforehand to a new generation of students. The "Black Robes" typically came into a classroom equipped with a thorough knowledge of the liberal arts, which they taught in tandem with moral rectitude. This scheme became fundamental and non-negotiable when it came to the maturation of a well-rounded Catholic school student. Therefore, Jesuits had to be "men of intelligence...self-sacrifice...[with]...good knowledge of their subject..." in order to enter the ranks of professional education (Schwickerath, 1903, p. 410). To solidify their sense of purpose, the Holy Orders taken by

each Jesuit involved the vow of solemn obedience, which included teaching others without financial remuneration or personal reward.

Jesuits who taught in the United States during the 1800s often tended to be schooled in Europe, where they did not have a degree system ranging from the bachelor to doctorate level per se. These novice teachers, or "scholastics," were often issued special diplomas to satisfy strict American educational credential standards, but clear mastery of a subject at least within the context of Jesuit scholarship took precedence over the requisition of notarized proof. Despite an extensive training regimen required of all priests, those who became scholars sometimes made poor teachers and vice versa, but the transmission of information had to be delivered regardless of the effectiveness level involved. In other words, "Everything leads the theologian and the true philosopher to be an educator; the scholar, the learned specialist, may content himself with being an instructor" (Schwickerath, 1903, pp. 407-408). Therefore, most teachers did not have to be true scholars, but they had to have a basic yet solid background in the ways of Catholic doctrine that they could impart to their students.

Professor-pupil interaction involved a strong measure of cooperation, since the ability to learn lesson plans was based upon a solid foundation of repetition and drill for each subject represented. This method of promoting organized redundancy combined with a growing reputation for academic soundness in their protégés brought recognition and praise to the Jesuits, who were often sought out by the Catholic hierarchy to build or direct colleges throughout the United States during the 19th century. However, opportunities for proliferation tended to far outweigh means, as the number of priests available to teach was low in contrast to their counterparts from the secular community (Power, 1958). Despite the fact that Catholic schools sometimes had to hire non-clergy as instructors, Jesuit educators were given priority on matters of staffing and administrative control when they did establish an institutional presence.

Since Jesuit schools often served several grades within a single physical plant, the secular educational establishment tended to have qualms about the quality and lasting value of preparation received by these students. This contention rested upon differences in the training and value system that defined and differentiated Jesuits from non-Jesuits.

With the raising of the social status of the Catholic population through increasing prosperity, more and more Catholics began entering the professions.... Difficulties arose when students from Jesuit schools presented their credits. The Jesuit institution did not show a clear demarcation between secondary and collegiate instruction; there seemed a preponderance of classics in their courses; the technical terminology employed was quite different from that of outside institutions. At first, the Jesuits felt that an injustice was being done to their schools. They believed that the Jesuit instructors, by rea-

son of their long and severe training, were better equipped for their work than the average public high-school teacher, whose preparation was, at this period, admittedly inadequate. (McGucken, 1932, p. 139)

These arguments were part of the reason conflicts arose among critics who saw the emergence of Catholic youth, long a religious minority group, finding slow but steady public, political, and cultural acceptance within the fabric of American society. Although negative attitudes persisted, the presence of Catholicism and its Jesuit element within United States history began during the 18th century and evolved in stature over the next several decades.

## **JESUIT ROOTS AND EXPANSION IN NEW JERSEY HISTORY**

Jesuit-administered colleges can trace their origins back to mid-16th century Europe, when schools were established in various cities across the continent including Lisbon, Padua, Venice, and others (Farrell, 1938). Consequently, the advent of Jesuit higher education in America was a concept that focused mainly on tutoring males with a grammar and secondary school background in the ways of Catholic scholarship. This particular joint arrangement did not have traditional roots in the United States, but rather it arose from the European *Gymnasium* or "Faculty of Letters" (language studies) model which consolidated and advanced student progress not by age, but according to the level of academic proficiency achieved on an individual basis. However, this adaptation ran counter to the American system of separate yet distinctive elementary, secondary, and four-year college divisions (McGucken, 1932). Despite the popularity of this particular sequence, the initial stages of Jesuit standardization centered around operating their high school and collegiate units within a single framework which involved a multiyear (usually six or seven annual terms) program of study.

The Society of Jesus has been synonymous with American Catholic education from the days when the first mission school was established at St. Mary's City, Maryland, in 1634 and the first college, Georgetown, which began operation in 1789.

The Jesuits had a long history of success and excellence in conducting European colleges; their colleges served as indirect prototypes for Catholic colleges in America. John Carroll (first American bishop), an ex-Jesuit, was the founder of Georgetown.... The colleges which followed...tended to model their courses of study after those of the first Catholic college...a model curriculum for Catholic higher education until the first decade of the twentieth century. (Power, 1958, pp. 55-56)

This foundation yielded success in terms of “brick and mortar” representation, as 152 colleges extant under the Jesuit banner were established nationwide between 1789 and 1900.

A majority of Jesuit institutions in operation during the 19th century devoted only two or three years of college-level coaching to philosophy, higher mathematics, natural science, and economic studies. In addition, post-secondary education followed a sequential order that included such staples as Humanities (freshman), Rhetoric (sophomore), and Philosophy (both junior and senior years), designed to round out the requirements expected of students enrolled in the collegiate division (Schwickerath, 1903). Known as the “Saint Louis Plan” and developed at Jesuit-run Saint Louis University, this blueprint for a more Americanized division of grade levels including separate “prep” and college academies came into vogue between 1890 and 1920, and subsequently attracted much support among a majority of Catholic colleges across the United States (Power, 1958). This arrangement solidified the curriculum and became a prime catalyst in the establishment of modern Jesuit colleges and universities.

During the late 1800s, the establishment of Catholic colleges became a prevalent and lasting means of promulgating the benefits of a complete liberal arts education with distinctive characteristics. This view associated with the heaven-directed nature of Jesuit education not only was based on the concept of faith, but also became a means of building practicality, wisdom, and mental competence. Therefore, self-development became part of the challenge for Catholic college faculty and students in their quest to be accepted within American society while still maintaining a strong adherence to religious principles. Opening their educational system to members of the Church and non-Catholics alike provided a measure of respect among wide ranges of people.

Catholic education distinguishes between ultimate goals and proximate ones. The ultimate goals remain constant and unchanging: they center around the person’s union with God. Catholic schools’ ultimate goals are absolutes that hold for all students regardless of race, culture, or religious affiliation. The proximate goals are more flexible: they reflect the changing needs and demands of society. All Catholic school goals are consonant with the foundational principles of the United States. The historian Henry Steele Commager said that “after 1880 it might indeed be maintained that the Catholic Church was one of the most effective of all agencies for democracy and Americanization.” (Buetow, 1988, p. 78)

The combination of Catholicism and Americanization in terms of democratic unity expressed by Commager can be traced through a combination of educational openness and via the old Jesuit missionary ideal (as practiced on the Native American population during the 1500s and 1600s with varying

degrees of success) in being all things to all people in order to win all, which helped attract some acceptance of the Order within the mainstream of society (Dolan, 1985). Despite these overtures into different segments of society, the Jesuits still administered to Catholics in larger numbers than any other group. Otherwise, the quest for attaining goals of an intellectual and spiritual nature also encompassed the Catholic population in New Jersey, which boasted a long-standing presence in the development of religious and state affairs.

The colony of New Jersey, founded by the Dutch West India Company in the 1600s, later became a British-controlled territory where restrictions against teaching and worshipping the "Romanish Religion" were enacted. When it came to the combination of religion and educational training, almost every Protestant church featured a corresponding school; but when it came to erudition, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), not the Society of Jesus, was the most prevalent denomination in East Jersey throughout the early 18th century (Flynn, 1904). The Quakers placed their emphasis on the concept of religious toleration and a "common" educational scheme which differed drastically from the institutions of higher education operated by more fundamental and conservatively structured Christian sects such as the Presbyterians (College of New Jersey, later Princeton University) founded in 1746 and the Dutch Reformed Church (Queens, later Rutgers College) built in 1766.

The Jesuits had no presence in New Jersey until the 1730s, when two missionary priests, Theodore Schneider, S.J., and Ferdinand Farmer, S.J., arrived and spent the remainder of the 18th century presiding over Mass and dispensing basic lessons in Catechism to the few hundred Catholics living within the colony at this time (*Bishops of Newark*, 1978). Although the Society of Jesus became the first Catholic missionary order represented in the Garden State, they were virtual pariahs during the earliest stages of the American experience, and it would not be until 1871 that they were able to assume control of their first parish, St. Peter's of Jersey City, where they established a presence which has lasted up through the present day.

The Most Reverend Winand Wigger, Bishop of Newark from 1881 to 1901, endorsed the value of a Catholic education for the youth of Northern New Jersey; and by 1900, the total number of students who attended Catholic grade schools within Newark alone totaled approximately 35,800 (*Bishops of Newark*, 1978). However, this figure was disproportionate when compared to the number of individuals who enrolled at colleges and universities throughout the state, where many times opportunities were limited for Catholic candidates.

In 1880, New Jersey had a population of 1,131,000 and only 688 attended college at the time. This figure for college attendance included seminarians as well as full time liberal arts students. For the vast majority of people, a grade school education was all that could be expected. Private high schools

and colleges were too expensive to be within the means of most. For Catholics, there was an added difficulty about higher education. Even if they could afford to attend the more prestigious institutions like Princeton and Rutgers—and very, very few could—there were serious religious objections to attending a non-Catholic school. In 1880, most private non-Catholic higher education was religiously affiliated with one or another branch of Protestantism. There was a mutual antipathy. Princeton was not aching to recruit the sons of Irish railroad workers into its student body, and the Irish would view the Orangemen of Princeton much as they would view the Orangemen of Belfast. The Ecumenical Age had not yet dawned. (Cronin, 1989, p. 2)

During the 1890s, American Catholics traditionally attended college in fewer numbers than their Protestant counterparts, who often had more opportunities (including financial, spare time, legacy ties) and fewer restrictions (such as quotas, ethnic prejudice) facing them en route to attendance at different citadels of higher education across the nation.

Aside from Saint Peter's, there were few Catholic institutions of higher education located in New Jersey during the 1890s, and they could all be found within the Diocese of Newark. Seton Hall College for men, founded in 1856, along with the College of St. Elizabeth for women, founded in 1899, were operational during the turn of the century, but enrollment remained relatively low and homogeneous, where a predictably Catholic, Caucasian, and citified student body predominated at each. In order to serve the core of its Catholic constituency, higher education centers with a Jesuit presence were often located in the heart of urban America. The attraction of book learning typically came to fruition for young men from city streets where the glass works, pottery factories, railroad depots, and other blue collar outlets offered the means by which grandfathers and fathers could pay for their sons to move up the socioeconomic ladder (Flynn, 1904).

## **AMERICAN JESUIT EDUCATION, 1895-1900**

By 1900, there were 3,811 American Catholic schools educating over 850,000 students, including a total of 11 Jesuit colleges founded between 1870 and 1891. During the 1890s, approximately 4% of American men in their mid- to late teens attended college; therefore, low enrollment became a factor as Jesuit schools remained in a somewhat tenuous position for survival throughout the post-Civil War era. However, a change in perspective came by 1900 as the Society of Jesus assumed charge of 26 institutions of higher education. Enrollment in these schools reached approximately 7,200 by the end of 1901 (Schwickerath, 1903). These figures were still low in comparison to the national curve, which showed that Catholic education endured some decreased interest due in part to the practice of "dropping preparatory class-

es” combined with the outlook of more “Americanized” students who saw Latin, Greek, or theology as less useful than courses taught at secular colleges (McGucken, 1932, pp. 142-143).

The accessibility of a Jesuit education was not based on academic potential alone; for many the cost of a college education was a financial burden. Between 1890 and 1900 expenses varied, but in most cases tuition became quite a challenge for students and their families to raise. For example, attendance at Georgetown cost \$380 during the 1900 term, while fellow Jesuit schools including Holy Cross rose from \$60 in 1890 to \$260 by 1900, and Fordham’s rate rose from \$60 in 1890 to \$325 a decade later (Power, 1958). Despite the discrepancies in tuition, the humanities curriculum remained static at most Jesuit institutions regardless of location, enrollment figures, and related factors.

These colleges all had a seven-year program. First, there were four years of Grammar in Latin, Greek, English, and either German or French. The years of Grammar were followed by three years of Poetry, Rhetoric, and Philosophy. The enrollment figures above, therefore, include what we would call today a high school (the Grammar years) and a college (Poetry, Rhetoric, and Philosophy). At St. Peter’s, for example, it was not until 1900 that a clear distinction was made between the high school and college divisions. (Cronin, 1989, p. 2)

Despite the large outlay of money and rigorous study schedule expected, the rationale for Catholic youth undertaking a college education in many respects led to more lucrative and prominent callings which included such popular choices as business, law, medicine, and the clergy.

## **CHARLES ELIOT AND THE JESUIT EDUCATION DEBATE OF 1899**

Charles Eliot, president of Harvard College during the 1890s, was a staunch proponent of “electivism” in any and all educational programs; therefore, he did not adhere to the long-standing Jesuit tradition of an unyielding liberal arts education. In the October 1899 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*, Eliot made various assertions that the Jesuit brand of scholarship was antiquated and inferior to plans found at Harvard and other American colleges and universities.

There are those who say that there should be no election of studies in secondary schools. Another instance of uniform prescribed education may be found in the curriculum of the Jesuit colleges, which has remained almost unchanged for four hundred years, disregarding some trifling concessions to natural sciences. That these examples are both ecclesiastical is not without significance. Nothing but an unhesitating belief in the divine wisdom is equal

to contriving a prescribed course of study equally good for even two children of the same family between the ages of eight and eighteen. Direct revelation from on high would be the only satisfactory basis for a uniform prescribed school curriculum. The immense deepening and expanding of human knowledge in the Nineteenth Century, and the increasing sense of the sanctity of the individual's gifts and willpower have made uniform prescriptions of study in secondary schools impossible and absurd. (Eliot, 1899, p. 443)

The Jesuits were also criticized for restraining personal intellectual liberty despite their previously stated objective of training thoughtful, moralistic individuals. This emphasis on a seemingly more virtuous, less pragmatic educational experience resulted in Eliot's assertion and drew ire from the Jesuit establishment in turn. The most outspoken opponent of Eliot was Timothy J. Brosnahan, S.J., of Woodstock, Maryland, who challenged the Harvard president on the manner in which Jesuits developed a student's intellect to meet a wide range of academic situations. Brosnahan pointed out that elective diversity outside of the liberal arts existed at most Jesuit colleges, but it included only basic fare such as business, introductory science, and mathematics. He further contended that a student should acquire the fundamental intellectual tools and broader educational outlook during the first few years of college before a more refined, specialized discipline is pursued afterward (Cronin, 1989).

A similar response to Eliot came directly from Dr. Henry A. Brann, rector of St. Agnes Church in New York City, during an address to Saint Peter's College graduates on June 26, 1900, entitled "The Jesuit Colleges and Harvard University," in which he praised the merits of a Jesuit education. He looked to the Catholic system overall by stating that from God all academic disciplines arise, and thus the Jesuits were able to follow this trend within their overall mission.

The Jesuit no more believes in indifferentism in education than he believes in it in religion. There is a hierarchy in the branches of knowledge. A knowledge of bugs is not as important as a knowledge of Greek, Latin or of English literature. The Jesuit chooses the best in everything in literature and science, and the youth learn(s) that, and allows him to elect his studies only when he has acquired wisdom with age and experience. The Jesuit stands to the student in the place of parents and does what the good parent does. He provides wholesome food for the children. A professor of many years standing at Princeton University told me recently that all the American universities are deteriorating because of the abuse of the elective system. (Brann, 1900, pp. 5-6)

Brann went on to bare his sentiments in regard to the long-standing existence of the Jesuits and their work on behalf of scholarship in Europe and America alike.

Gentlemen, the Jesuits have few human consolations. They have always had enemies, and are used to being calumniated and abused. But there is one pleasure of which no one can deprive them; and that is the consolation of being able, as finished scholars, to enjoy a hearty laugh at the shallow phrases, the false logic, the untruths, and the sham erudition of their calumniators. I am satisfied that the heartiest laugh the Jesuits have had in a quarter of a century, has been over President Eliot's ill founded, ill considered and silly attack on their colleges. Then gentlemen, stand by your college and stand by the Jesuits. A century before Harvard existed, the Jesuits were filling Europe with great scholars; and centuries after Harvard has ceased to exist, the Jesuits will continue to do the same noble work. They are in the front rank of the Church, and just as sure as truth prevails in the end, the Jesuit graduates will stand in the front rank of the state. For other things being equal, the man with the best education will forge to the front. Here then, Catholics of Hudson County, in St. Peter's College you have an illuminating centre, around which you can rally. (Brann, 1900, pp. 8-9)

Although this speech is biased and counters Eliot's earlier contention, it did serve to open and illuminate the state of Jesuit education and the situation facing young Catholic students in New Jersey at the turn of the century.

## SAINT PETER'S COLLEGE, 1899-1900

Saint Peter's College, located in Jersey City, became the last postsecondary school founded as part of the American New York-Canadian Mission of the Society of Jesus. This entity then came under the auspices of the Maryland-New York Province along with Georgetown, Fordham, Holy Cross, and five other institutions seven years later. The college was officially opened for classes in 1878 with 123 registered students (Cronin, 1989). By the fall of 1899, Saint Peter's had an all-male student body numbering 162. This was the highest enrollment figure to date, but it was still the lowest tally among all Jesuit colleges within the Maryland-New York Province and fell short of neighboring Fordham, which hosted 616 students (*Ministeria Spiritualia*, 1899). What distinguished the early school was its appeal to the sons of first- or second-generation immigrants who wished to climb the social ladder higher than their parents had dared envision. A majority of these young men came from a solid working class Irish or German Catholic background. Although the school was Church-affiliated, those who did not adhere to the Catholic faith were also welcome to enroll at Saint Peter's, and their personal beliefs were "wholly respected" (*Catalogue of Saint Peter's*, 1899, pp. 9-10).

In geographical terms, close to two fifths of all those listed on the attendance ledger lived in Jersey City proper while several others resided elsewhere in Hudson County. A number of other northern New Jersey municipalities such as Newark, Paterson, and Elizabeth were also well represented.

However, this group was provincially homogeneous in that no student traveled more than 50 miles to attend, and only one from out of state (Brooklyn) came to the school during this period (*Catalogue*, 1899). Counted among the underclassmen destined for postgraduate fame attending Saint Peter's at this time were 1899 graduates Rush R. Rankin, S.J., a teacher and army chaplain during World War I, and lawyer Joseph P. Tumulty, who became President Woodrow Wilson's personal secretary.

The original Saint Peter's campus consisted of a lone four-story brick edifice located on Grand Street in Jersey City. In addition to ample office space and a library boasting 2,600 volumes, the surrounding complex was described as follows:

The class-rooms are bright and pleasant, and the means for ventilation and heat are excellent. The play-ground is larger than in most city schools, and there is, besides, a large playroom where the students can recreate in stormy or very cold weather. (*Catalogue*, 1899, p. 4)

This had decided advantages since Saint Peter's was strictly a day school for commuters during the late 19th century. Those who traveled both near and far took advantage of the college building's proximity to the nearby Pennsylvania Train Depot, and almost all matriculated students benefited from discounted travel passes each semester. This proved helpful to a student's coffers after paying an entrance fee of \$5.00 (sophomores and juniors had to pay an additional \$5.00 for the chemicals they used during laboratory experiments) and the school tuition of \$10.25 per quarter (*Catalogue*, 1899).

The administrative hierarchy of Saint Peter's in 1899 and 1900 was headed by President John Harpes, S.J., who served as the chief executive from 1891-1900. In company with Harpes, approximately 80% of all faculty and staff members also belonged to the Society of Jesus. Counted among those in the Jesuit Community at this time were William F. Gannon, S.J., vice president and prefect of studies, Joseph Zwinge, S.J, school president from 1900-1902; and Joseph Busam, S.J., who doubled as treasurer and German instructor. Although some teachers did not belong to the order, a Catholic education was featured first and foremost at Saint Peter's.

The College will never strike its colors to educators who wish to banish God and religion from the school-room. It emphatically condemns any system that sacrifices the welfare of the heart and conscience to progress in human learning.... (*Catalogue*, 1899, pp. 9-10)

In terms of college admissions, the overall Saint Peter's experience in 1899 and 1900 differed sharply from contemporary standards. The prefect of studies could accept students for admittance only after they produced proof they knew a member of the faculty or submitted a letter certifying their pre-

vious academic experience and learning potential. Instead of making a choice among majors and elective course options, students in those days were bound to follow the rarely flexible seven-year core curriculum plan. In unison with book study, the budding scholars were simultaneously expected to develop their social skills as well:

The Faculty lay great stress on the development of the manners of perfect gentlemen, and consider the rules of politeness a very important part of the course of studies. Whatever, therefore, is contrary to good breeding, is out of place in the College. Any ungentlemanly conduct or insubordination to a professor or officer of the College, shall be visited with severe punishment, and even with dismissal, should the gravity of the offense require such a penalty. (*Catalogue*, 1899, pp. 11-12)

The liberal arts curriculum of Saint Peter's in 1899 was based primarily on the aforementioned *Ratio Studiorum* of 1599 and stressed the long-standing Jesuit model of vigorous study in classical language, modern linguistics, and the humanities. Therefore, a solid knowledge of Latin, Greek, and a choice of French or German became mandatory for all students who attended the college. Mythology, logic and metaphysics, ethics, penmanship, and bookkeeping were also among the class titles found in the school catalog. On a broader scale, the annual pattern of coursework proficiency expected of each pupil fell into the standard Saint Peter's routine where training, discipline, and development of the mind were stressed. First year: preparatory classes in rudiments and Christian doctrine; second year: grammar; third year: grammar (second class); fourth year: Collegiate Department (first class); fifth year: sophomore (poetry); sixth year: junior (rhetoric); and seventh year: senior (philosophy). In addition, the school offered a few evening classes that counted toward a master of arts degree and medical training approved by the New York State Board of Regents (*Catalogue*, 1899).

### Saint Peter's College "Curriculum and Class Hours," 1899-1900 Time Schedule - Collegiate Department

Freshman	Hours	Sophomore	Hours	Junior	Hours	Senior	Hours
Latin	5	Latin	5	Philosophy	5	Psych./Theology	5
Greek	4	Greek	4	Latin	2	Ethics	5
English	4	English	4	Greek	2	Latin	2
History	2	History	2	English	2	English	2
Mathematics	4	Mechanics &		Physics	5	Hist. Philosophy	2
Christ. Doctrine	1	Geology/Astron.	4	Philosophy of		Pol. Economy	1
Elocution	1	Christ. Doctrine	1	History	2	Christ. Doctrine	1
Modern		General		Christ. Doctrine	1	Elocution	1
<u>Languages</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>Chemistry</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>Elocution</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Physiology</u>	<u>1</u>
Total	23	Total	22	Total	20	Total	20

Source: Cronin, 1989, p. 7.

Saint Peter's followed a quarterly academic calendar in 1899. The first term began on the first Tuesday in September, and the second on November 16. During the spring semester, February 1 and April 15 signaled the onset of the third and fourth terms. School was usually in session each Monday through Saturday (except Thursdays and selected national or religious holidays) during the academic year (*Catalogue*, 1899). A day in the life of a student started and ended with communal prayers at 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Each class period and the afternoon recess (with the exception of classical languages from 9:30 to 10:40 a.m., with a 20-minute break afterwards) lasted exactly one hour. The heaviest concentration of teaching took place between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. when modern language, chemistry, elocution, and a "Catechetical lecture" were presented. Learning did not automatically cease once a student left the classroom. The administration strongly recommended that a student (under parental supervision) devote two or three hours of extra time to study and mentally reinforce new material learned earlier that day (*Catalogue*, 1899).

This system of regimentation also extended into the accepted customs of maintaining peak attendance and academic performance. A student at Saint Peter's in 1899 could only be excused from school legitimately with written proof of serious illness from a parent or guardian, but otherwise it remained "...attendance from the very first day, attendance every day, and attendance the whole day" as the accepted rule (*Catalogue*, 1899, p. 12). In the case of multiple absences, administrators strongly recommended one to quit and resume classes the following semester instead of proceeding onward at a disadvantage. In terms of measuring achievement levels, the Saint Peter's student was graded on a scale from 0 to 100. Those who achieved a final average between 90% and 100% (per class) received "First Grade" honors, while those compiling an 85% to 90% mark won "Second Grade" recognition, and so forth. Only a few lucky students earned scholarships, and if they fell below a 70% performance level, they risked losing their credentials altogether (*Catalogue*, 1899).

The school sent home progress reports at monthly intervals. Since each form needed to be signed and returned, this allowed a parent the option of reward or reproach depending on how well their son fared. Academic progress was not only gauged by recitations, essays, and quizzes, but also through a series of major written and oral examinations. These tests usually accounted for one half of a semester-ending grade total. Finals were typically scheduled on Mondays or Fridays (a few Thursday and Saturday sessions also held) in January and June. The intrepid Saint Peter's student took an exam at the rate of one per day over a two-hour period (*Catalogue*, 1899). Promotion to the next level followed with a high enough average, but a repeat performance in the same or even a lower grade was required for those who fell below the 60% level.

Aside from classroom anxieties, the well-rounded Saint Peter's pupil of 1899 could find solace in the form of extracurricular activities. The only mandatory program on campus was the Military Drill, whereby once a week students donned their blue and gray uniforms and participated in marching exercises to build up their physical endurance (*Catalogue*, 1899). Senior class members with talents of both a loquacious and intellectual nature congregated on alternating Wednesdays as part of the Debate Society. The Literary Society also had an annual debate for the Davis Prize, a reward of 20 gold dollars for the best speaker. Those with more pious leanings belonged to the Sodality of the Holy Angels, Sodality of the Immaculate Conception, or League of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Each met weekly in the school chapel on Wednesday mornings. Still others joined the Athletic Association to play baseball or football or run track (*Catalogue*, 1899).

Commencement exercises for the class of 1899 were held at St. Peter's Hall in Jersey City on June 22 before a sold-out audience of educators, parents, and friends. Eight graduates earned the Bachelor of Arts diploma, and seven received the newly instituted Master of Arts degree at this ceremony. The commencement speaker was Joseph McCormick, rector of St. John's Church in Newark, who also earned the first Doctor of Philosophy degree ever conferred by Saint Peter's (*Catalogue*, 1899). Although this class was small in number, the majority made significant contributions to society by pursuing advanced degrees, entering the priesthood, or engaging in business and financial ventures upon graduation.

## CONCLUSION

After 1900, Saint Peter's College underwent dramatic changes including the closing of its college division from 1918-1929 before its re-opening in 1930. During this period of closure and rebirth the Jesuits staffed Saint Peter's Preparatory School and the newly reorganized college. Both institutions remained fundamentally tied to the *Ratio Studiorum* through most of the 20th century, but the school of today has grown and changed in different ways. No longer a staid liberal arts institute with an all-male, Hudson County-oriented student body, Saint Peter's has academically expanded its curriculum to include business, science, nursing, computer technology, and other subjects within a coeducational and culturally diverse framework which plays host to students from across the world. With an alumni base of over 25,000 students, the fundamental mission of intellectual development symbolically tied to the *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* principle has remained intact at New Jersey's lone Jesuit-operated institution of higher education over the past 100 years.

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