

Holy Things, Holy People

Exploring Catholic history in the Northwest through treasures from the past

PART 16: SEATTLE COLLEGE MEMORABILIA

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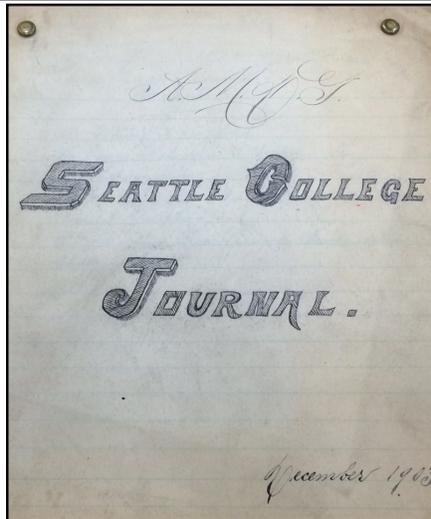
The story of Seattle University—like the story of St. James Cathedral—begins with Seattle’s pioneer priest, Father Francis Xavier Prefontaine. In 1890, by popular demand, he began a school for boys, conducted by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. The first classes were taught in the basement of Our Lady of Good Help Church, but Prefontaine was nothing if not ambitious. He purchased a lot at 6th and Spring with his own money, and built a grandiose structure which he dubbed “St. Francis Hall” in honor of his patron saint.

At about the same time, Father Cataldo of the Jesuits sent Father Van Gorp to Seattle in search of property for a future school. He made a down payment on a large plot of land on Madison at Broadway. Meanwhile, Father Prefontaine had apparently bitten off more than he could chew at St. Francis Hall. In April, 1891, Bishop Junger wrote to Father Cataldo, asking him to send Jesuits to manage the school. Father Cataldo put the Jesuits’ own school project on hold and sent two priests, Father Victor Garrand and Father Adrian Sweere, to take over the school.

Father Garrand was an unforgettable character. Born in France, he was a missionary priest almost all his life, serving in Syria and Egypt before coming to Yakima. But he also liked the finer things in life: in Yakima he not only built an elegant church and residence, he also added what he called his “little paradise”: a garden, orchard, and vineyard, which Brother Carfagno (an excellent cook) used to prepare exquisite meals. Father Garrand also had a taste for fine liturgy—

“processions, pageants, and magnificent altar celebrations,” in the words of Jesuit historian Wilfred Schoenberg. “Garrand was also uncommonly pious. Emotional, sometimes he wept when he preached. Kind and zealous, he worked too hard for his own good.”

Father Garrand and Father Sweere arrived in Seattle in the fall of 1891, and took over St. Francis Hall, renaming it Immaculate Conception. Father Prefontaine was certainly grateful for their presence in Seattle, which relieved him of responsibility for the school. That did not prevent him, however, from charging them rent for the use of the building—to the tune of \$2,250 a year! Within a few years the Jesuits were able to build a new church and school on



Above: An issue of the short-lived “Seattle College Journal” from December, 1903.

Below: An “SC” sweater treasured by Seattle College graduate Dr. Bernard Bader and given by his daughter Marilyn Bader-Nesse to the Archives. *Courtesy of Special Collections; Lemieux Library, Seattle University. Special thanks to Mary Sepulveda, Coordinator of Special Collections & Archives.*

their own property at Madison and Broadway (both were in the building now known as the Garrand Building). By 1898, enrollment had grown and Immaculate Conception was renamed Seattle College. The Jesuit Fathers focused on an intensive college preparatory curriculum, including Latin, Greek, English, history, math, geography, and Christian doctrine. It was not until 1909 that the College granted its first bachelor’s degree.

The Seattle University Archives include a number of treasures from those early days, including a Seattle College sweatshirt, and a dozen hand-written issues of the *Seattle College Journal*. This journal—“published” from 1901 to 1903—includes handwritten student essays on a variety of topics. We get a glimpse of the classroom—“Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 1:15 to 2:15 P. M. we slight our good old Saxon and assume the language of Pindar and Homer.” Another contribution describes a rigorous silent retreat which took place during the week before Thanksgiving: the boys spent “their days in silent meditation, while often, I suppose, thoughts of a large smoking turkey and mince pies crept in unawares but only to be cast aside immediately.”

The students were free to write about their own interests—thus even the Christmas stories include bear attacks, shipwrecks, and train collisions. The essays respond to current events as well, including the assassination of President McKinley in September, 1901. Of particular interest are several essays that describe visits to the Cathedral Fair of October, 1903 which helped raise the funds to build St. James Cathedral. One essay describes how the

young men would be besieged by young ladies all entreating him to buy raffle tickets: “he reminded me of a sour pickle, dropped by mistake into a barrel of sweet ones. The poor fellow seemed to be reciting a silent prayer to his maker, that the girls would at least leave him keep five cents for carfare home.”

Today, Seattle University continues to be a good neighbor to St. James Cathedral!

—Corinna Laughlin, Pastoral Assistant for Liturgy

Want to know more? Read Wilfred Schoenberg SJ’s *Paths to the Northwest: A Jesuit History of the Oregon Province*.