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## Aquinas College High School The Expansion in the 1920s

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### NEW BUILDING FOR AQUINAS COLLEGE

The *Aquinian* provides a rather full account of the new building itself. The explicitness of the detail indicates, one assumes, how delighted the faculty and students were on the occasion of the dedication of their new facility. The building solved the tremendous crowding situation experienced by the institution. The sturdiness of the new building is demonstrated in that it was decided by the predecessors of Columbus State Community College not to demolish the structure when the campus of Aquinas became a state institution in the late 1960's.

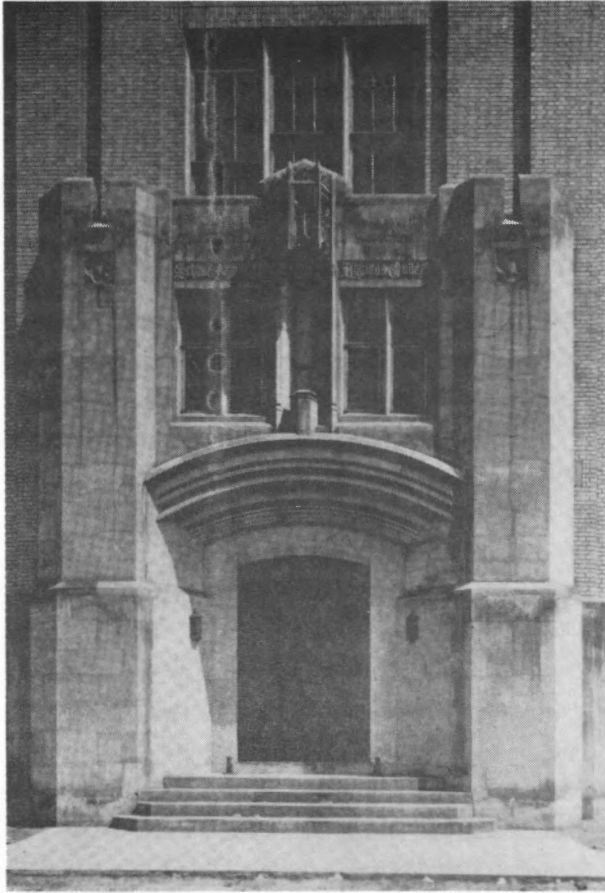
In the new Aquinas High School, the Dominican Order has a building of which it may well be proud. Designed by some of the leading architects of the country, the structure is a masterful combination of beauty and utility and is, without a doubt, the finest of its kind and size in or near Columbus. Although the proposed improvements in the landscape have not as yet been completed, the building adds much to the beauty of the surrounding neighborhood. Especially imposing does it appear when its lines of collegiate Gothic architecture are accentuated by the direct rays of the sun.

Our school is of sufficient size to take care of the anticipated increase in the student body within the next ten years, at least. Although its shape causes it to appear small when viewed from North Washington Avenue, towards which it fronts, it is eighty-two feet in width, one hundred fifty feet in depth and three and one-half stories in height. Rooms which are now used for special classes will be devoted to carrying out the regular class schedule, when such a change becomes necessary.

Besides the main entrance, which is set in the middle of a beautiful stone facade, there are two entrances on the northerly side of the building, and one on the southerly side. Over each of these, the insignia of the Dominican Order is carved in stone. Stairways are so arranged that all parts of the building are within easy access of any entrance.

### The Interior of the New Building

A more perfect arrangement of the school's interior for utilitarian purposes is hardly possible. [There follows a rather lengthy account of the heating plant and the electrical ventilation system.]... At the present time, the cafeteria room is used by the Eutrapelian Society for its debates and entertainments. However, as soon as conditions warrant, it will be diverted to its ultimate purpose.



*Gothic facade, entrance to the Gymnasium*

Only by seeing the splendid layout of the different floors can one appreciate the great amount of study and experience necessary to produce such a strikingly attractive arrangement. As one enters the building through its elaborate main entrance and mounts the stairs to the first floor landing, he is surrounded by a panorama of beauty seldom found in a building of this type. On the entresol is the administration office, with its high grade equipment. Directly in front of him is the spacious gymnasium, while off the lobby are two classrooms. At both sides are stairways leading to the upper and lower floor.

Ascending either of these stairways, one will be prompted to stop and examine closely the well-planned second floor. On one side of the corridor are three classrooms and a storeroom for books and other school supplies. Opposite these rooms may be seen two entrances to the balcony of the gymnasium.

### The Classrooms

The third floor is laid out in the shape of a T. A corridor of the usual width, from which extend two classrooms, is met by a more spacious one extending nearly the full depth of the building. On each side of the latter corridor are three classrooms of unusually large dimensions.

All classrooms are light and airy, many of them being exposed to the sunlight from two sides. The smaller ones are capable of accommodating, comfortably, fifty persons. Those on the third floor have an even greater seating capacity. Provision for the safekeeping of the pupil's clothing is made by closets with sliding doors, built along the walls of the classrooms. When these doors are closed, the closets add to the attractiveness of the room....

There follows a description of the gymnasium and a rather long account again of the ventilation system. This system, called the "Univent System," was a point of particular pride by the faculty and students. The account notes that the new Aquinas structure is the first school building in Columbus to adopt this system. "Means of ventilation," the narrative explains, "has always been one of the most serious problems confronting the builders of schools and colleges." One suspects that the serious problems with tuberculosis during the early part of this century accounts for the emphasis on ventilation systems.

The narrative ends in the following way.

Space will not permit here the enumeration of the various other features of our new building. Having realized our inability to write a description which would do the building justice, we have attempted to bring to the minds of our readers, the more outstanding characteristics of the beautiful new home of the Green and Gold. [The 1926 *Aquinian*, pp. 9-13.]

That the students were justifiably proud of their new classroom building on the campus of the original St. Patrick's College is evident from even

a cursory reading of the yearbook accounts. One notes the preparedness for a growth in enrollment. But little did those writing in the 1925-26 school year know about the forthcoming Great Depression, a decade long event from which Aquinas and the Dominican Fathers in Columbus would never recover fully. Also at this time, from thirty to forty per cent of the enrolled young men were pre-ecclesiastical students preparing for entrance to Guzman Hall at Providence College, and then on to the Dominican novitiate for their formation year as Dominican clerical novices. These students were housed in the dormitory, which appears to have been the second floor of Meany Hall, the original building for St. Patrick's College. The "Eutrapelian Society" mentioned above was the social group around which the Dominican pre-ecclesiastical students formed their extracurricular activities while students at Aquinas.

The dormitory closed following the 1933-34 academic year. The effect of the dormitory closing together with the hard times of the Great Depression caused the enrollment to plummet. It took nearly a quarter century for the enrollment to again rise to its size in 1925-26. The yearbooks of the late 1920's are full of photographs of students who eventually became Dominican priests, some of whom served later as instructors at their alma mater in Columbus. Three college presidents, all of Providence College, graduated from Aquinas and lived in the dormitory: Fathers Frederick Foley, Robert Slavin and Vincent Dore. Father Foley returned to Aquinas in the early 1950's and taught freshman English to many Aquinas students, one of whom is the author.

#### THE DEDICATION OF THE AQUINAS GYMNASIUM

The 1926 *Aquinian* also includes a fascinating account of the dedication of the gymnasium later

in the academic year. The festivities took place in mid-January before a basketball game with East High School. The *Aquinian* account goes as follows:

The evening of January eighteenth was a memorable one in the annals of athletics in the State of Ohio, marking as it did the impressive dedication of the new Aquinas gymnasium. An hour before the beginning of the ceremonies proper to the occasion, every seat was occupied and all the standing room filled by a throng of gaily laughing and expectant people. The sides of the balcony were tastefully draped with the school colors, green and gold, while from the center of it hung the American flag, which was especially significant of the event, emblemizing as it does the spirit of fair play and clean sportsmanship, of which our country is so justly proud.

#### The Mayor Assists at the Dedication

A hush fell upon the assemblage when, at eight-fifteen o'clock, Mayor James, J. Thomas, escorted by our popular Athletic Director, Rev. C. M. Mulvey, O.P., stepped forward to address the enthusiastic audience. In eloquent words his honor gave utterance to the fact that a healthy body is most essential to a sound mind. After reminding the student of Aquinas of their good fortune in having a gymnasium which was especially fitted to make them physically strong, and as a result develop them into better and more useful citizens, the mayor unstintingly praised the architectural beauty of the new building, and heartily congratulated those who had made such a structure possible by their zeal and unselfish devotion to such worthy objects of public service.

Mr. Wiggins, the second speaker of the evening, was then introduced. In a very able address this worthy gentleman expressed his admiration of the virile manhood he always found displayed by the teams of Aquinas College. He, too, paid glowing tribute to the splendid facilities which the new school affords for the intellectual and physical development of its students.

Father Mulvey brought the program of speeches to a close.

The keynote of his talk was that Aquinas would be ever mindful of the interest shown in her, and that, imbued with a new spirit of progress, her teams would meet all adversaries with a firm determination to achieve the highest possible success in every sport in which the school is so ably represented.

### The Dedication Game with East High School

The speeches concluded, the Black and Orange basketballers of East Hi made their appearance upon the floor. A few seconds later, the Aquinas squad, presenting a brilliant sight in uniforms of vivid green and gold, swarmed out upon the court, and was greeted by a deafening roar of applause--applause that was more a shout of exultation than at last Aquinas might send forth her warriors to do battle for her upon their own floor. Who can tell what emotions of joy and thanksgiving welled up in the heart of each player as his happy, eager face greeted his friend and admirers? We cannot measure this happiness, but we do know that there was a consolation in being able to appreciate as a reality, something that had been the dream and hope of every loyal Aquinas athlete for the past eighteen years.

That there is some hyperbole in the above narrative is obvious. Nonetheless, the account does provide more than a hint of the excitement which the new gymnasium gave for the students and faculty of Aquinas. The first game in the new gymnasium had been played on December 18, a loss to Lima St. Rose. Aquinas also lost the gymnasium dedication game that January evening in 1926.

### FATHER VINCENT DONOVAN

The faculty moderator of the Aquinian during this period was Father Vincent Donovan. Father Donovan came to Aquinas from Providence College and made an impact on the institution right from the start. Under his direction, the 1926 Aquinian won a national prize in a competition for secondary school yearbooks. He

was also the director of the Dormitory, and in this role he served as the spiritual advisor for the group of Dominican seminarians then in residence at Aquinas. Father Donovan eventually returned to Providence College as a member of the English faculty there. Father Donovan was the brother of William, "Wild Bill," Donovan, the person in charge of the OSS during the Second World War and the one who founded the organization which eventually became the CIA. Father Donovan was but one of a host of Dominican Fathers who served with distinction as faculty members at Aquinas College High School, the institution founded by the American religious sons of Edward Dominic Fenwick.

The same fate held for Aquinas College High School in Columbus as took place for the four other colleges founded by the Dominicans in the nineteenth century--St Thomas of Aquin in Springfield, Kentucky, St. Joseph in Somerset, Ohio, St. Thomas refounded in Kentucky, and the Sinsinawa Mound College in Wisconsin. All were suppressed and closed for one reason or another. Today only Fenwick High School in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park, and Rhode Island's Providence College remain as secular institutions of learning staffed by the Dominican Fathers in the United States.

How much interest Meagher had in Aquinas in particular and Columbus in general is not clear in reading the documents available. The *Dominicana*, a quarterly publication edited by the American Dominicans, reports faithfully about many newsworthy items concerning Providence College; one rarely finds, however, news accounts about Aquinas. Certainly many Dominicans knew that their provincial had great interest in the success of Providence College; one reference indicates that the Dominican institution in Rhode Island was the particularly favorite project of Meagher's. From the 1930's onward, one suspects that an assignment to teach at Aquinas was not seen as a "plum" appointment

by some of the Dominicans sent to teach at the high school at Mt. Vernon and Washington Avenues in Columbus.

The Dominican Fathers struggled to keep Aquinas afloat during the Great Depression, and this struggle continued for a decade or so after that. Classes in the 1950's finally started to approach the size of those enrolled in the 1920's. Yet finances were still very tight. By the early 1960's, the days of Aquinas were numbered. In the spring of 1962, the Dominican Provincial Council, meeting in New York, voted unanimously to close Aquinas in an expedient fashion and thus terminate nearly sixty years of education for the young men of Columbus. That the American Dominicans from whose ranks came the teaching staff at Aquinas had, at this time, a definite "east coast" flavor is obvious.

The last class graduated in August, 1965 at St. Patrick's Church. A multitude of events led to the closing of Aquinas College High School, a sad day for the legions of alumni who still proudly wear their Green and Gold tee shirts which proclaim on one side, "Endangered Species," and on the other "Aquinas Alumni"!

#### ENDNOTES

The author acknowledges the assistance of

Father Cornelius Forester, the late archivist of the Dominican Province of St. Joseph. More than any other Dominican archivist, Father Forester took a keen interest in the author's work attempting to sort out the many issues central to understanding the history of Aquinas College High School. Not only did Father Forester respond quickly and thoughtfully to several queries posed by the author, but he was never hesitant to both check documents in the archives and to make the relevant copies needed for undertaking and completing serious historical work. Sadly, Father Forester died before this article which contains historical information kindly supplied by him appeared in print.

The author also kindly acknowledges Mr. Tom Nerny who generously contributed the 1926 volume of the Aquinian to the collection of historical documents being assembled on Aquinas College High School.

In addition, the author thanks Robert M. Stark for assistance in obtaining a correct record of the dates and results of the first basketball games played in the then-new gymnasium.

Eventually a second edition of the History of Aquinas College High School will be written and published. *O quam spes!*

### Abstracts from *The Catholic Telegraph*

(Continued, from Vol. XX, No.11)

August 18, 1836

[Episcopal Visitation, concluded]

NEWARK, in the fertile and populous county of Licking, was our next station. To this beautiful town the Bishop was conveyed by Mr. Henry Dittoe, of Somerset, accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Miles. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered at the residence of Mr. M'Carthy, and there were a few communicants, who were

exhorted to perseverance. In the evening the Bishop preached at early candle-light, in the court house, the greater portion of his discourse being directed against the vulgar prejudices against the Catholic Church, on the ground of its pretended opposition to scripture, and civil and religious liberty, and the much-abused and calumniated convents. We are sure, from the intelligence and independence, as well as the

manly indignation expressed by several of his hearers, that the *motives* of the maligners of such institutions are here duly appreciated, and that a reaction is even now taking place, which will make it the interest of Roman Catholics to pray that their "enemies may write a book."

Married -- On the 19th July, in Malaga, Monroe county, by the Rev. James Reid, Mr. Simon Dorr to Miss Ellen McCammon.

September 8, 1836

EPISCOPAL VISITATION, -- OHIO

St. Luke's church, near Danville, Knox county, was visited on the 14th and 15th of August. The congregation has greatly increased in numbers -- hence the necessity of a resident Pastor is felt more sensibly than ever. Children grow up without instruction, the old are in danger of perversion, and the sick often die without the consolations of religion. There were several hundred communicants, but few of the young people were reputed sufficiently acquainted with the Christian doctrine to receive confirmation. One hundred thousand bricks have been lately burnt, and preparations made for the erection of a new church, on a lot given by Mr George Sapp. the presence of a faithful shepherd is all the flock requires to bring this and other good designs to execution.

The citizens of Mount Vernon having regretted the impossibility of procuring a suitable place for the bishop to address them at his last visitation in 1834, lost no time in apprizing him that the radical Methodist church, tendered by its worthy proprietor, Judge Banning, was, at this time, at his service, and that one or two discourses would not fail to attract a large and attentive audience. This Bishop accepted the invitation, and preached a long sermon, beginning at early candlelight on Monday evening, the 15th instant, on the Rule of Faith. Having observed in the conclusion of his remarks, that he had selected that subject as one that embraced all the

debateable ground between the Catholic church and the various sects, and therefore likely to prove of more general interest and practical effect, but that he should be happy to expatiate at the next meeting on any subject which a majority of his hearers might suggest. Judge Banning replied that he would consult with some of the persons present, and inform him of the topic which they should prefer for discussion on the following evening. During the afternoon of the 16th, he waited on the Bishop, with many kind, and we have no doubt, sincere professions of esteem and hospitable proffers of his house, and at the same time handing the following note:

*Right Rev. Sir* -- Please give your views on the Ten Commandments, commonly called law, confining your remarks principally to the 2d Commandment. How was the Moral Law to be enforced?

2nd. What are we to understand by the NEW COMMANDMENT which Christ gave to his disciples, contained in the 34th and 35th verses of the 13th chapter of John's Gospel."

The Bishop availed himself of the occasion which the intelligent reader will easily perceive this text afforded him, to show that the positive law of the decalogue, was the same as the natural law, with the exception that a day was specified in the third commandment for rendering to God the homage which nature dictated -- that this law had been engraven on the flashy tablet of the heart, before it was written on stone, by the finger of the Almighty. That it was equally obligatory on all men -- whether Jews, or Greeks, barbarous, or civilized. [There follow fully two columns of the Bishop's sermon given at Mt. Vernon. Though interesting, and perhaps profitable reading for today, the Bishop's words are not our purpose and will not be reproduced here.]

On the 17th, the bishop having heard of a large

family of Catholics, never, that he knew of, visited by a priest, about five miles from Mount Vernon, went to see them, and preached on the nature, obligations and effects of baptism, which sacrament he administered in the house of a worthy man, named Mr. Hunt, who is married to an excellent Catholic. The following Thursday, the Bishop preached in the Methodist meeting house at Mansfield, in Richland county, celebrated the holy sacrifice at the residence of Mr. Borland, who is likewise married to a Catholic lady, admitted a few persons to the holy communion, and greatly regretted it was not in his power to visit a large settlement of Catholics twelve miles from the town, where a church has been recently erected. Every where he heard of Catholics, in the midst of swarms of other denominations, in regions where the truths of our holy faith had been never proclaimed, or the divine oblation presented to God for the living and the dead. His heart was oppressed with sadness at the impossibility of sending Pastors to the scattered sheep of the wilderness -- and the cries of the large and destitute congregations of Canton, Stallstown, St. Luke's, Wappaghkonetta, Columbus, Brown county, Tiffin and many others continued to be heard during the sequel of his weary ride to the chief town of Seneca. O.

September 15, 1836

[Continuation of the Episcopal Visitation. Bishop Purcell visited Tiffin, M'Cutchenville, Fort Ball in Tiffin County, Lower Sandusky, Muddy Creek, and Norwalk.]

September 22, 1836

[Account of the bishop's arrival in Cincinnati on Saturday last, accompanied by (Archbishop) Dr. Eccleston of Baltimore.]

December 22, 1836

[Ordinations to minor orders of Basil Shorb, Michael McGann, and James McCaffrey.]

(To be continued)

## Notes on the Catholic Chaplains of the Ohio Penitentiary

Some additional news notes have been found in the *Catholic Columbian* relative to the Catholic chaplains of the Ohio Penitentiary. The first of these indicates that Father Thomas Delaney, of whose life a sketch appeared in the *Bulletin* last September, was in the diocese and assigned to the Penitentiary a little earlier than we had known. The second gives credit to more of the early priests whom we had not known to have been chaplains. The first piece appeared in the *Columbian* of January 12, 1884.

### A Grand Day for the Catholic Prisoners at the Penitentiary

Last Sunday Rev. Father Delaney made the Catholic prisoners happy by the distribution of Crucifixes and religious pictures to hang on the walls of their cells, also Rosaries and Agnes [*sic*] Deis. A great many Protestants assembled to witness the investiture of the convicts with the Scapular. During the Mass, Miss Ernest, a promising soprano, sang several solos, the beautiful Christmas hymn, "Noe," by Adams, also O Salutaris, by Schubert. After the Mass, the beautiful and touching ceremony of giving the Scapular took place -- Father Delaney, with his characteristic eloquence, preaching on the Catholic devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and how the devotion of the Scapular was introduced, the advantages thereof, and fidelity to it.

After the sermon came the vesture with the Scapular. This religious ceremony was imposing and effective -- some of the visitors being moved to tears. Each prisoner, having been to confession and communion, held in his hand a blessed Scapular. Father Delaney, advancing to the front of the platform, holding in his hand a scapular, said: "Now, my dear children, I have explained the devotion of the scapular. I now come to the closing part of the day's holy work. (stand and hold your scapulars in your hands.) You have arrived now at the moment you are to don the badge or livery of the Blessed Mother of God and Savior Jesus Christ. Beg of her, as you will be known

henceforward as her special children, to shield you from all harm, to guide you henceforth and lead you into the paths of rectitude and virtue; that Mary, Mother of God Incarnate, may obtain from the Sacred Heart of her divine Son, forgiveness for the years of past transgressions; and for the new year just dawning -- strength, fortitude and perseverance in advancing up the ladder of Christian perfection. You will now repeat with me aloud on your knees, an act of contrition, with all fervor of soul and heart. (Here the prisoners recited the act, tears running down the cheeks of many.) Put on your Scapulars now, my children, in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. You are now invested, and may God in His mercy, ever keep you faithful. Be true to it -- as the magnet is to the polar star -- never dishonor nor be ashamed of it; wear it in life and in death, and at the last judgment, for you and for me, it will be a saving sign, and in the presence of the Mother of God from the hands of her divine Son."

The morning's exercises closed with the beautiful hymn, *Salve Regina*, Mercedante, sung with great effect by Miss Ernest, who has devoted her zeal to this noble work.

This second piece appeared in the *Columbian* of January 29, 1884:

"The good work that is being done by Father Delaney in behalf of the Catholic prisoners at the Penitentiary was inaugurated many years ago by Bishop Rosecrans, who appointed Rev. G. H. Ahrens as the first regular chaplain of the prison. On Father Ahrens' appointment to the Rectorship

of Holy Cross Church, Father Kuehn filled his place for a time until his departure from the city left it again vacant. Father Clarke next assumed charge and labored hard in the interests of his mission and succeeded in obtaining many privileges that had not been accorded his predecessors. When failing health obliged Father Clarke to relinquish all pastoral duty, his place at the prison was supplied by Father Magevney until the appointment of Father Delaney. It will thus be seen that diocesan authorities have always consulted for the good of the prisoners, and sacrificingly supplied them with the means of performing the duties of religion. In fact, many congregations have not enjoyed the same advantages."

Of the above, Fathers Kuehn and Magevney had not previously been identified as chaplains. Father Kuehn must have been the Rev. John J. Kuehn who was stationed at the Cathedral, according to the 1880 *Catholic Directory*. Nothing more is known of him. Father Magevney was Rev. Hugh L. Magevney, S.J., who in 1883 and 1884 was President of the Catholic College of Columbus, located on North High Street. Mention of Father Magevney was made in connection with Monsignor Mattingly's brief sketch of that institution in the *Bulletin* of May, 1975. It is expected that much more complete sketches of both the institution and its first President will appear in the *Bulletin* later this year.

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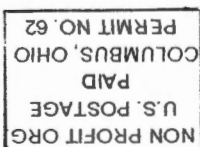
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