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## Chapter 16. Holy Ghost College—Duquesne University 1878–1923

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## Chapter 16

### **Holy Ghost College—Duquesne University 1878–1923**

Duquesne University is almost as old as the American Province. Before its foundation, three unsuccessful attempts had been made by secular clergy and by an Order of Brothers to establish a work of Catholic Higher Education in the city of Pittsburgh. Where they failed, the Fathers of the Holy Ghost have succeeded in the face of constantly recurring difficulties, because, no doubt, of the guiding hand of Providence, but also because of the spirit of sacrifice and zeal that has animated every worker assigned to the task.

The founder of the Catholic College of the Holy Ghost – as the institution was first denominated—was the Very Rev. Joseph Strub, CSSp, of holy memory, first Provincial of the Order in the United States. It was in the year 1878, while he was still rector of St. Mary’s Church, Sharpsburg, that he consented, at the pressing invitation of the late Bishop Domenec, to open a school in which the members of his Order, aided by competent laymen, would give instruction in the classical, scientific, and commercial branches, combined with sound religious training. After various attempts to secure a suitable structure in some central location, it was decided to select the spacious building of Smith’s tailoring establishment, located in what was then a select residential district, at the corner of Wylie and Federal Street. The latter is now Fernando Street. Accordingly, in spite of the very brief space of time remaining before the beginning of the school session, and in spite of the lack of accommodation for both pupils and professors, the new College opened its doors for the admission of students on October 1, 1878.

Its early vicissitudes did not tend to encourage the promoter to whose appeal only forty students responded. But, under the earnest and energetic direction of the first President, the late Rev. W. P. Power, CSSp, who arrived from the Island of Trinidad on January 15, 1879, and who soon gathered about him a splendid

corps of teachers, the scholars made manifest progress. At the first commencement exercises, held in the Fifth Avenue Lyceum, on June 20, 1879, after a severe public examination, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Domenec sounded the praises of the New Catholic College, and the daily papers expressed the highest appreciation of the work done during the first academic year. It was no wonder, then that at the re-opening in the following September, one hundred and twenty-four students presented themselves for registration, and that in June 1882 the faculty of the new institution felt that then had been sufficiently encouraged to seek a charter. By this Charter, when obtained, it was incorporated under the title of “The Pittsburgh Catholic College of the Holy Ghost,” with the power to confer the usual degrees.

*Historical Sketches of Foundations of the American Province of the Holy Ghost Fathers, 1875–1923. Vol. 1. Pages 26–27. Mimeograph*