

A Window Into the Past
FATHER MURPHY'S WATER PUMP
A Story from Duquesne University Archives

Father John T. Murphy, C.S.Sp., third president of Duquesne University (then Pittsburgh Catholic College of the Holy Ghost) had a water pump installed behind the Administration Building, "Old Main," in 1889. The installation was prompted by additional pollution and contamination to the city's water system because of the Johnstown Flood. The water had been questionable before this, and Father Murphy was concerned with the health of students and staff. The well was able to tap into the clean water of the aquifer, a.k.a. the "fourth river" un-



Student use of the pump, 1920s

der the city. The pump was a popular meeting place for students in the early years of the University. During the infamous 1936 St. Patrick's Day flood, it was one of the only sources of clean water in the downtown area. As a result, rescuers used Duquesne and its hilltop neighborhood, the Bluff, as a base of operations during the crisis. It was capped in 1938, primarily because students would often drink from the same ladle, causing cold and flu outbreaks during the semester. By that point, city water had improved substantially. Today the

pump is housed in the University Archives.



Father John T. Murphy, C.S.Sp.



Today the pump is housed in the Duquesne University Archives.