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Pictures from the Past: Saint Vincent's College, Los Angeles

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The second location of St. Vincent's College, Los Angeles, at Sixth and Broadway. Circa 1869.
*Courtesy of DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives,
DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*

Pictures from the Past: *Saint Vincent's College, Los Angeles*

BY

STAFFORD POOLE, C.M.¹

In 1852, at the request of Joseph Sadoc Alemany, at that time the bishop of Monterey, California, the Daughters of Charity in Emmitsburg sent some sisters to San Francisco to direct an orphanage, an infant asylum, and a lying-in hospital. These sisters petitioned the superior general, Father Etienne, to send some Vincentians to be their directors. Etienne, in turn, directed the American provincial, Stephen Vincent Ryan, to supply the Daughters with some priests. In addition, Alemany's successor as bishop of Monterey, Thaddeus Amat, C.M. (1853-1859; Monterey and Los Angeles 1859-1878) wanted the Vincentians to begin a college and seminary in Los Angeles.

In February 1864 three priests — Michael Rubi, John Beakey, and John Asmuth, their superior — sailed from New York. All three were invalids who, it was hoped, would benefit from the mild climate of California. On their arrival in Los Angeles, they had difficulties with the bishop over the question of property. Amat had originally agreed to give the Community property for the school, but by the arrival of the first Vincentians Rome was insisting that all property be held in the bishop's name. Asmuth and his companions considered the situation to be unacceptable.

The Vincentians left Los Angeles and went to San Francisco. No foundation was possible there because Alemany insisted that they live with diocesan priests for three years and give him their rules for examination. At the invitation of Eugene R. O'Connell, the vicar apostolic of Marysville, California, two of them accepted direction of a parish in Carson City, Nevada, which at that time was in O'Connell's vicariate. Rubi, who was pastor, built the church almost single-handed, and Beakey taught school. During that time, it seems, Amat redoubled his efforts to have the Vincentians come to Los Angeles. Rubi and Beakey stayed in Carson City until mid-1865, when difficulties with the bishop caused them to leave. Rubi went to San Francisco where he met Father James MacGill, who had been sent there by the provincial, and the two set out for Los Angeles. There they were joined by Asmuth and Beakey.

¹ The following is an excerpt from *The American Vincentians: A Popular History of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States, 1815-1987*, ed. John E. Rybolt, C.M. (Brooklyn, N.Y.: New City Press, 1988), pp. 301-14. The book is available for purchase online at <http://vsi.depaul.edu>, click on Printed Resources, then Bookstore; or inquire by phone at 312-362-7139.



An early photo of faculty at St. Vincent's, dated 1899.
 From the top left, clockwise: J.J. Martin, C.M., M. Morris, C.M.,
 Thomas Ryan, C.M., Michael Carr, C.M.
*Courtesy of DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives,
 DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*

On 9 May 1865 Asmuth signed a contract with Amat for a mixed college/seminary. The land for the establishment was to be for the perpetual use of the Vincentians, and they were also to be allowed to take up a collection in Los Angeles. The bishop was free to build a separate major seminary at a later date if he wished. No provision was made for a parish because this might have prejudiced the city's only existing one, the old plaza church of Our Lady, Queen of the Angels. This omission was to cause difficulties later on. Amat also pledged himself to contribute \$1000 a year to support the Vincentians on condition that they receive four seminarians at \$100 each. In addition he also pledged the revenues from a piece of land, variously valued at \$20,000 to \$50,000, for the support of seminarians. The bishop did not fulfill these pledges for very long. On 13 June Amat renewed his permission for the fund drive.

Since there was no land or building immediately available, the

Vincentians rented a house on the old plaza in the heart of the city and there in August 1865 inaugurated Saint Vincent's College and seminary, the first institution of higher learning in southern California. The house diarist, who was probably MacGill, wrote that "poverty, hard work, suffering and little pay was the result."² This difficult situation was worsened when Asmuth died in December of 1865 and then Beakey in March of 1866. Rubi succeeded Asmuth as superior and was in turn succeeded by MacGill.

In view of all this Stephen Vincent Ryan, the provincial, expressed his willingness to withdraw the Vincentians from Los Angeles, but the men on the scene wanted to hear from the bishop first. Amat offered them land at Pajaro, three miles from Watsonville in the north of the state, and then the San Gabriel mission. Both were refused. He then offered nine acres of land that had been given to him by the city, but it was located in an unhealthy area and had no water. At this juncture a local citizen, Ozro Childs, offered nine acres of his own land in one of the best areas of the city, and the province purchased an adjacent five acres from him. It comprised a full city block bounded by Sixth and Seventh Streets and Broadway and Hill.



St. Vincent's College at Sixth and Broadway, 1869.
*Courtesy of DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives,
 DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*

² Annals of St. Vincent's College 1882-1905, p. 184, St. Vincent's College, Los Angeles, Box 2, DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives, DePaul University Special Collections and Archives, Chicago, IL (hereinafter DRMA).

Committees were organized on the basis of nationality for a fundraising campaign. Like most such campaigns it produced more talk than money, but the diarist noted that “Americans, Jews, and Germans” did donate.³ Los Angeles County contributed \$1000 and the city \$500. The city’s donation was contested by some local citizens, who took the matter to court. They secured an injunction against it, but it was overturned by a higher court. Another \$5000 was borrowed from the Hibernia Bank of San Francisco. On 29 July 1866 Amat laid the cornerstone for the new college. Rubi designed the building and supervised its construction. In March 1867 the first mass was sung in the college chapel after the students and faculty had moved into the new building. In September 1867 the college, now strengthened with four more Vincentians, opened “with a fair number of boys.”⁴

In 1868 the college had fifty-three boarders and nine day students. In the following year it was incorporated by the state of California, and the Vincentian provincial, John Hayden, visited the house after crossing the country by rail. In 1870 the enrollment declined because of an outbreak of smallpox in the city. Two years later the enrollment fell again because of drought. In that same year, 1872, MacGill wrote of the students that the Vincentians were endeavoring “to instill into their young minds love of God religion and the church and in no part of the Earth is it more needed than here in California, where there is so much liberty and so much vice.”⁵ Contrasting the beginnings of the college in 1865, when there was not a foot of ground, a house, nor a cent of money, he spoke of a fine college, property valued at \$50,000, an orchard with 200 orange and lemon trees, and, most importantly, it was all free of debts.

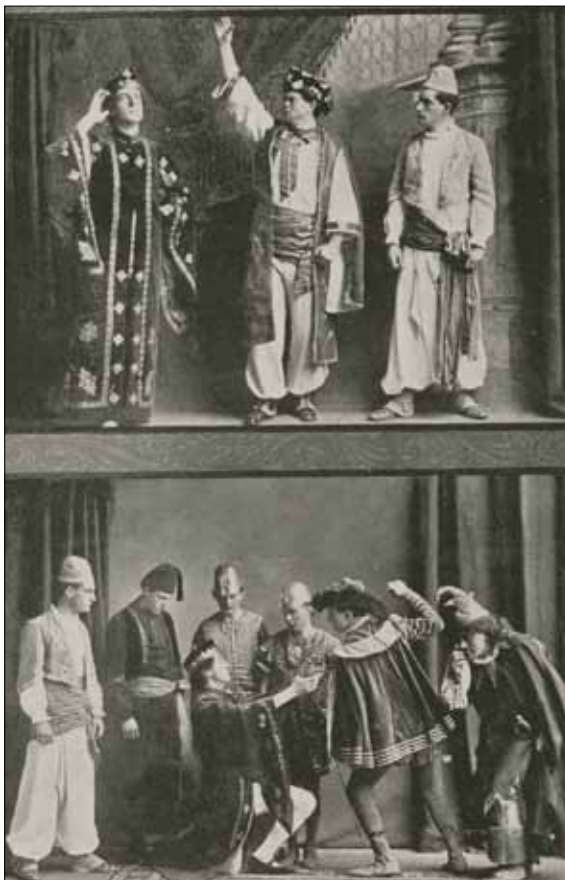
The 1870s were difficult years for the college. In 1875 there were only three priests on the faculty and no brothers. One of the priests was in ill health and another was an alcoholic. In contrast Our Lady of the Angels at Niagara in that same year had twelve priests and ten brothers. By the following year enrollment in Los Angeles had fallen to fourteen boarders and forty day students, most of whom did not pay tuition. The Vincentians were barely able to make ends meet. In 1871 Father Michael Richardson was appointed treasurer and seven years later became superior. He inherited a difficult situation but was able to guide the college out of this troubled period.

At the same time relations with Amat had deteriorated to the point that the very future of the college appeared to be in jeopardy. At some unknown time he had complained to Hayden, the provincial, about the

³ Annals, p. 186, DRMA.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁵ MacGill to Etienne, 5 June 1872, Archives of the General Curia, Rome, Italy (hereinafter AGC), Etats-Unis, Maison: Los Angeles.



Character scenes in *Hermigild*, Given by St. Vincent's College students, Los Angeles Theater.
 Courtesy of DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives,
 DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

unbecoming conduct (unspecified) of some of the Vincentians. In 1870 he had a more serious complaint. He wrote to Etienne that an express condition of the contract had been that there should be no public church at the college, because it was intended to be a *petit séminaire* and the seminarians were to be kept apart from the laity. In addition the one local parish was poor and could not put up with competition. Amat had just laid the cornerstone of his new cathedral when he heard that the Vincentians at Saint Vincent's had opened their chapel to the public. In addition he heard rumors that they were planning to build a church. Some people thought that they were going into deliberate competition with the cathedral, and the Vincentians believed that their Community privileges permitted this.

In 1875 Amat renewed his demands that the Vincentians not admit the faithful to mass in the college chapel, contending that it was a private, not



The graduating high school class of 1909 at St. Vincent's.
*Courtesy of DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives,
 DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*

a semi-public oratory. Since the college was facing a personnel crisis at the time, the provincial, Father Rolando, felt that a time of decision was at hand. Amat was not only demanding that the Vincentians close their chapel to non-students, but he also wanted them to confine themselves to teaching at the college, something that they were reluctant to do. At the same time he did not hesitate to invite them to preach in the cathedral, a task they carried out without recompense. The college needed to be expanded. The sale of some of the college lands would have paid for new buildings, but the Vincentians were reluctant to undertake this in view of Amat's ambiguous attitude. In 1876 the provincial council decided to withdraw from the college, but the decision was not implemented. Nor, it appears, did the Vincentians close the chapel doors.

By 1879 the situation had improved somewhat, and Richardson, who had been appointed superior the year before, reported that there were five priests in the house, four of them in good health. Enrollment had declined again because of hard times. There were forty students whereas normal attendance was sixty. The priests undertook no duties outside the college. They helped the sisters, if invited. "Our relations with the clergy of the Diocese are most cordial. The Rt. Rev. Bishop [Francis Mora] frequently visits us and in numerous ways evinces his good will towards us."⁶ As will be seen, these good relations did not last.

During the 1870s and 1880s, enrollment varied from thirty to sixty, according to the prosperity or lack of it, of the citizens of Los Angeles. Though

⁶ Richardson to Fiat, 13 November 1879, AGC, Etats-Unis, Maison: Los Angeles.

the college remained free of debts, life was still spartan. Thanksgiving of 1883 “brought neither turkey nor recreation.”⁷ In December the city was lighted by electricity for the first time, and the following year brought indoor plumbing to the college.



Stereoscope card, dated 1907. On the back:

“This picture shows the main building of St. Vincent’s College. Located on Grand Ave., Los Angeles, between Washington and Eighteenth Streets. This college is one of the important educational institutions in Southern California, covering classical, scientific, and commercial courses.”

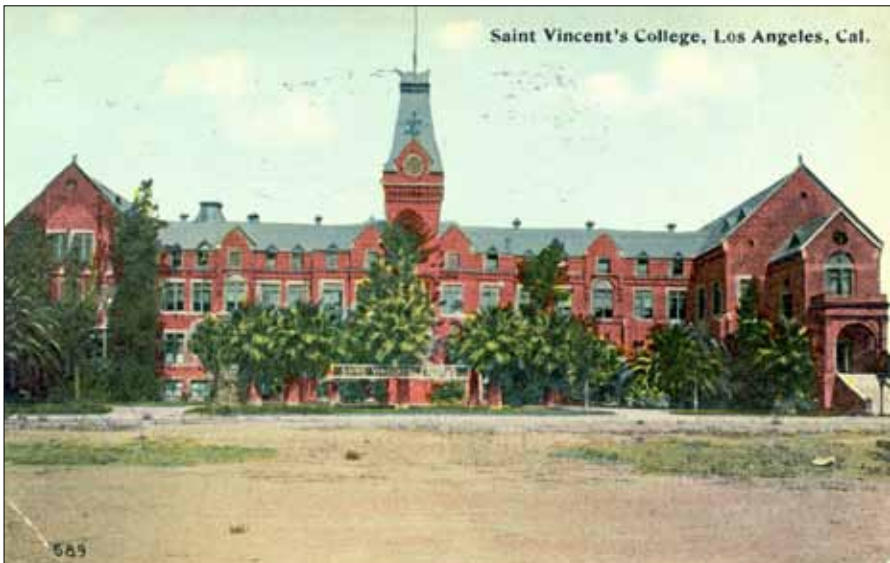
*Courtesy of DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives,
DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*

From the beginning, it appears, the seminary part of the program had been secondary to the collegiate one and by 1886 had all but disappeared. At various times the standard curriculum included Latin, reading, spelling, bookkeeping, penmanship, mathematics, rhetoric, elocution, dictation, geography, engraving, history, composition, geometry, French, German, Spanish, and catechism. In 1885 chemistry and bible history were added. Commercial or business offerings seem to have been especially popular. Discipline presented a problem. Father Aloysius Meyer complained at one point that the prefect had lost all control of the students. In 1883 a boy was expelled for biting the prefect. In 1885 one of the boys ran away, was

⁷ Annals, p. 171, DRMA.

reclaimed and whipped. He ran away again, was recaptured, whipped, and locked in a room until his father could come to claim him.

There were also ongoing problems with Amat's successor, Bishop Francis Mora (1878-1896). In 1885 he issued a series of demands that no outsiders be allowed to attend mass in the chapel, that the students whose families lived in the city should not make their first communion in the chapel, and that students make their Easter duty at their home parish or in the cathedral. Mora was circumspect enough to send this list to the superior general, Antoine Fiat, in July of 1885 to ask if any of the demands contradicted the privileges of the Congregation of the Mission. Fiat turned them over to some experts who declared that all the demands did so, with the exception that day students could be required to make their Easter duty away from the college.



Postcard depicting exterior of St. Vincent's College at Grand and Washington.
 Postmarked 8 October 1915. Printed by Western Publishing & Novelty Co., Los Angeles, CA.
Courtesy of Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

In September the provincial, Father Thomas Smith, sent Fiat a rebuttal of Mora's demands. He pointed out that Mora, like Amat before him, had failed to pay the annual \$1000 that had been promised. With some exaggeration he accused Amat, and still more Mora, of forcing the Vincentians to give up the college because by forbidding public access to the chapel they were depriving the Community of the "rare and modest gifts that we were

receiving from them.”⁸ Smith also recounted the numerous times that Mora had declared the college to be worthless and expressed his desire to get rid of the Vincentians. Smith denied that there was an agreement that the Community would not open a public church, but he also denied that there was any intention to do so. It was impossible, he wrote, for the Vincentians to remain in a situation in which the bishop was so hostile. He concluded by suggesting that the matter be taken to Rome.

A month later, Father Meyer, the superior, supported some of Smith’s accusations. He wrote Fiat that the Community had a large house on an extensive lot in the heart of the city but that “our usefulness is entirely confined to the walls of our college.” Enrollment was down because of the small number of Catholics and because “the Bishop and clergy of the diocese are not our friends and never were. They not only take no interest in our College, but work against it, at least indirectly. The Bishop will not permit us even what our Privileges grant us.”⁹



Old St. Vincent’s Church and College. Undated, although presumably before 1905 and the addition to the structure of Father Meyer Hall.

*Courtesy of DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives,
DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*

⁸ Smith to Fiat, September 1885, AGC, Etats-Unis: visiteurs. This letter exists in the French translation only.

⁹ Meyer to Etienne, 15 October 1885, AGC, Etats-Unis, Maison: Los Angeles.

In January 1886 Smith went to Los Angeles on the advice of his council in order to reach an accommodation with Mora. He found the college to be free of debts and fairly prosperous. The principal difficulty was that it was too close to the cathedral, so he suggested that the only solution was to move the college and ask Mora for a church, though not necessarily a parish, where the Vincentians could exercise their ministry. He consulted with the college's house council and they agreed. It was believed that the sale of the college property would supply enough money for the purchase of land and the construction of a new college and church. Smith went to see Mora, who agreed to the proposal. On 25 January 1886 he issued an edict that gave the Vincentians a "quasi-parish" whose boundaries extended from east, west, and south of Twelfth Street. The decree did not define what a quasi-parish was.

In June 1886 the college property was sold for \$100,000. New property was quickly secured at Grand and Washington, a cornerstone laid, and construction begun (24 August 1886) on a new college and church. The new college building, which cost \$60,000, was less spacious than its predecessor. The whole process of construction moved with surprising rapidity. The first mass was sung in Saint Vincent de Paul church on 25 January 1887, and classes opened in the new college building on 7 February.

The halcyon days of Saint Vincent's College were during Meyer's two terms (1884-1893; 1894-1898). It had long since lost any semblance of being a minor seminary. In 1884 Meyer had reported to the superior general that the Vincentians lived a retired life. "We have no intercourse with the outside world; all our work is confined to the walls of our college." The enrollment was about ninety, thirty of them boarders. Meyer called them all good boys but without any inclination to the priesthood, for which there were no students at that time. He described the students as "like our country... a mixed nature: Mexicans, Californians, French, German, English, Dalmatians, Americans."¹⁰ In 1891 he sounded a more pessimistic note:

My confreres and I follow almost the same path, sacrificing our life and our talents in teaching letters to a certain number of worldly and ungrateful boys, most of whom stay in the college only by force; young people without faith, having no love or fear of God, Americans and Mexicans imbued with ideas of independence and liberty ...here in Southern California a part of the population has an indifferent and apathetic character, as in all hot countries.¹¹

¹⁰ Meyer to Fiat, 10 November 1884, *Ibid.*

¹¹ Meyer to Fiat, 18 February 1891, *Ibid.*

He repeated his earlier observation that in California there was no inclination to the priesthood. Only one native of California had ever been ordained, and he was found dead in his room on the morning of his first mass.¹²



Postcard, dated 19 March 1907. Printed by M. Rieder, Los Angeles, California and Leipzig. Correspondence reads: "Dear friend, Just a little token from the far West. Our city is a very pretty place. Yours in C, Alfreda Walberg"
Courtesy of Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

Meyer, a well known and respected civic figure, died on 2 February 1898. On 25 February Father John Linn became superior and was succeeded in 1901 by Joseph Glass. Glass was twenty-seven years old and had been a priest for only four years. He was a graduate of the college, which had been his home after the death of his mother when he was thirteen. As a Vincentian scholastic at Saint Mary's of the Barrens, he had been a protégé of Father William Barnwell, through whose influence he received his position. His direction of the college was to be tumultuous and controversial.

Externally the college seemed to be flourishing. By 1905 it had more than 300 students and some expansion of the physical plant. It was the "envy of the University of Southern California and Occidental College."¹³ In 1911 Glass claimed that in his ten years as superior the enrollment climbed from

¹² It has proved impossible to verify this story or to identify the person in question.

¹³ Francis J. Weber, "Whatever Happened to Saint Vincent's College?" *Vincentian Heritage* 6:1 (1985): 67.



“Champions. That’s how they rated in 1906.” St. Vincent’s baseball team photo.
*Courtesy of DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives,
 DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*

170 to 319 and that more degrees and diplomas had been conferred than under all his predecessors.

This success, however, stood on a precarious financial base. Saint Vincent’s had been debt free throughout most of its history, but Glass plunged it deeply into debt. He did this principally through land speculation. He purchased land in Los Angeles, in the Rancho La Cienega (the present Baldwin Hills), and in the San Fernando Valley. Some of these land purchases were quite shrewd — for example, the Baldwin Hills property, which cost \$46,000 in 1905, was sold for \$165,000 six years later. The difficulty was that the land market was volatile and subject to the vagaries of the economy. Glass was also denounced to the superior general for mixing personal and house funds indiscriminately, of buying land in his own name with community funds, and of forging the name of one of the college’s lay professors as a co-signer for a loan. It was widely believed, and with some plausibility, that Glass engineered the Vincentian withdrawal from Saint Vincent’s College in order to hide his financial mismanagement, cover a debt of more than \$400,000, and because the banks would no longer support him in his ventures. The number of accusations against Glass and the stature of some of those who made them, such as Francis Nugent and Charles Souvay, gives them great

weight. In fairness it should be mentioned that Glass had the opportunity to refute these charges and never adequately did so.



Postcard, dated 3 September 1909.

By Cardinell-Vincent Co., Los Angeles, CA; printed in Germany.

Courtesy of Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

The opportunity for relinquishing the college was given to him by Bishop Thomas Conaty of Los Angeles (1903-1915). Conaty had formerly been rector of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and had dreams of duplicating that institution on the West Coast. To that end he proposed adding a graduate school to Saint Vincent's and converting the college into a university. Initially Glass favored the idea. In November 1905 plans were announced for "making St. Vincent's college one of the largest institutions of learning in the United States."¹⁴ Glass purchased eighty-five acres of the Rancho La Cienega from E.J. "Lucky" Baldwin as the projected site for an expanded institution capable of accommodating 1000 students. Realistically the Vincentian Community did not have the resources in money or manpower to undertake such a venture. When Glass and the provincial administration had second thoughts about the project, Conaty remained adamant. When Conaty gave the Jesuits a parish in Santa Barbara in 1908, even though they agreed not to open a college in Southern California for

¹⁴ Los Angeles Times, 10 November 1905, cited in *Ibid.*, 69.

ten years, the move seemed to be an attempt to pressure the Vincentians into expanding Saint Vincent's. The effect, however, was just the opposite, since the inevitability of a Jesuit establishment became a leading argument for withdrawing the Vincentians from the college.



A leather postcard of St. Vincent's, no date.
Published by Cardinell-Vincent Co., Oakland, CA.
*Courtesy of DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives,
DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*

In 1909, as a result of a fire that destroyed a large part of Santa Clara University, the Jesuit provincial, Father Herman Goller, seriously considered transferring that institution to Los Angeles. Conaty discouraged the idea, but Glass and other Vincentians saw it as a clear alternative to the Vincentian involvement in Saint Vincent's College. Glass, Patrick McDonnell (the house treasurer), and Thomas Finney, the provincial, began a campaign to have the province give up the college and return its personnel to the Community's primary function, the home missions. Glass wrote about the discouragement of the priest faculty who were involved in a work that they did not want and for which they were ill prepared. He also pointed out the probability of the Jesuits' opening a college in southern California in competition with Saint Vincent's.

By January 1910 Finney and Glass had made the decision to withdraw from the college. Finney warned Glass to prepare himself for an avalanche of criticism. On 17 May of that year Glass wrote to Fiat to explain why the college should be closed, emphasizing the need to undertake the parish missions and the inevitability of the Jesuit competition. The latter reason sounded plausible, but while the Society of Jesus wanted to open a foundation in the Los Angeles area, it did not have the manpower to do so in 1910. A week after Glass's letter Finney wrote to Fiat, formally proposing the



A tintype etching picturing St. Vincent's College and Church. No date.
 Printed by Plaza Photograph and Tin Type Gallery, Los Angeles, CA.
*Courtesy of DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives,
 DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*

closure of the college in order to free men for the parish missions. Fiat gave permission on condition that Finney have the approval of his consultors. The provincial polled three of them by mail and argued the fourth, Musson, into agreement when the latter was reluctant to give his approval. By June of 1910 Finney could inform Glass that all the consultors and all the superiors but one had agreed. The holdout was Francis Nugent, who said that he would agree to the withdrawal only if DePaul and Dallas were also dropped. Finney seemed to lean toward that same opinion when he told the superior general that the closing of Saint Vincent's would be a strong argument for closing the other colleges, though in fact no serious move, or even consideration of a move, was ever made in that direction.

The decision to give up the college was reached before any definite commitment had been received from the Jesuits. Glass claimed that in the summer of 1910 he received a promise from Goller that the Jesuits would assume the direction of the college as an organic continuation of the Vincentian school. The Jesuits' intention appears to have been to use the old college buildings for a year and build a new one on the Baldwin Hills property. In August 1910, however, Goller wrote Conaty that it would be almost impossible for the Jesuits to assume the college immediately



St. Vincent's College football team. Undated, but believed to be 1909 or 1910.

*Courtesy of DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives,
DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*

and suggested a year's delay. The entire situation changed when Goller died on 5 November 1910. Under his successor, Father James Rockcliffe, Jesuit opinion turned away from moving Santa Clara to Southern California.

In early July Glass wrote to Finney that "I firmly believe that it is the beginning of a new and better era for our Congregation in this province."¹⁵ Despite this he urged caution and suggested that Bishop Conaty not be informed until January 1911. He also proposed June 1911 as the target date for the closing because the additional time would enable him to get the college on a better financial footing. Finney agreed to the postponement but advised informing the bishop earlier since rumors of a possible closing were already beginning to circulate.

Finney did not take his own advice and delayed for a long time before informing Conaty. In September 1910 he offered an attack of malaria as an excuse for delay. In that same month he prepared a draft of a letter to the bishop in which he cited the missions as the primary reason for closing the college. Anticipating the objection that newer and less secure colleges should be closed first, Finney wrote that the financial outlay and curriculum demands in Los Angeles were greater than in other places. By November Finney had still not sent the letter. Glass suggested that it be sent to him for hand delivery to the bishop. This Finney finally did on 22 November, though it was backdated to 12 September. It is uncertain, however, when the letter actually reached Conaty since his only existing reply to it came in the following February.

¹⁵ Glass to Finney, 2 July 1910, Provincial Files 1906-1926, Rev. Thomas O'Neil Finney, C.M., Box 1, DRMA.



Postcard, dated 6 March 1907. Printed by M. Rieder, Los Angeles, California and Leipzig.
 Courtesy of *Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*

On 23 February, Glass, alleging that the newspapers had gotten wind of the story, formally made public the withdrawal of the Vincentians from Saint Vincent's College. The news came as a general shock. Among the Vincentians Fathers Michael Richardson, a former president, and William Ponet expressed the strongest opposition. Glass denounced them both to Finney. "Father Richardson had the boldness to go down to the Vicar-General and to him express his bitter sentiments concerning the change." He called him "a source of considerable scandal to the confreres by his bitter denunciation of the authorities in the Congregation."¹⁶ Of Ponet he wrote "he not only called into question the motives assigned for this decision, but actually — and it seems maliciously — attributed false reasons for the change."¹⁷ He demanded that the provincial transfer the two men immediately. Finney obliged, sending telegrams to Richardson and Ponet to report to Saint Louis.

On 24 February, Conaty acknowledged the decision. Saying that the news had come to him like a thunder clap out of heaven, he wrote:

¹⁶ Glass to Finney, 24 February 1911, *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Glass to Finney, 11 March 1911, *Ibid.*



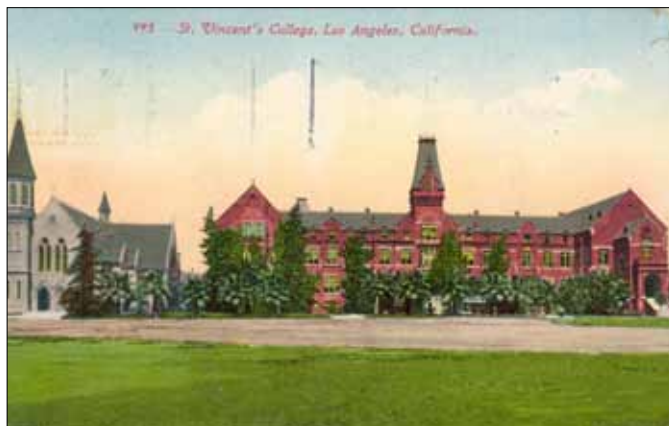
The class of 1911, the last graduating class of St. Vincent's High School.
*Courtesy of DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives,
 DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*

At the same time I cannot fail to again express the great surprise which came to me when I received your letter of instructions. There has been between the Vincentian Fathers and this diocese a very strong bond of union which has grown stronger with the years. During my association with St. Vincent's I have been anxious to help in every way possible toward the greater success of the college for I felt that it stood for the highest expression of our educational work and I lost no opportunity to strengthen in every way the hands of those in authority and aid them to the larger development of that college work upon which your Fathers were anxious to enter. I always found it a pleasure to work with them and I was proud of their successes.

In my own name and in the name of the diocese I wish to express my sincere gratitude for the noble service which St. Vincent's College has rendered to the church, not only in this community but thruout [*sic*] this state.... That so good a name as St. Vincent's may continue to live with us and

be associated with our diocese, I have asked that those who succeed you shall work under the name of "St. Vincent's College."¹⁸

In March 1911, Father David Phelan, editor of *The Western Watchman* (an authoritative, but not official, newspaper of the archdiocese of Saint Louis), phoned Father Michael Ryan, the rector of Kenrick Seminary, saying that he had received a letter from Glass to the effect that the Province was going to close all its colleges. Ryan informed Finney who hurriedly telegraphed Glass to recall any such letter to the Catholic press. Glass replied that his only statement had been to the Los Angeles diocesan paper. Finney agreed with that statement, but he seems to have had growing doubts about Glass. He wrote Glass that he had had an interview with Richardson and Ponet. "I was expecting to have a disagreeable interview but such was not the case. They said very little, and I likewise. I was astonished at the mildness and affability of Fr. Michael [Richardson]."¹⁹ For the first time the provincial indicated his wish to come to Los Angeles, though he never actually did so.



Postcard, dated 8 May 1912. Printed by Edward H. Mitchell, San Francisco, California.
 Courtesy of Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

In April 1911 Glass was dealt a thunderclap of his own. Rockcliffe informed Conaty and Glass that the Jesuits would not accept either the college building or the direction of a full collegiate program. Instead, they

¹⁸ Conaty to Finney, 24 February 1911, *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Finney to Glass, 30 March 1911, *Ibid.*

would proceed according to their tradition by dropping the college years and beginning a new institution with the first two years of high school. If this was unacceptable, the Jesuit provincial suggested that the Vincentians continue the direction of the college. Equivalently this meant that Saint Vincent's College would be terminated, and an entirely distinct institution would be initiated according to Jesuit traditions. Glass was upset not only over what he considered to be renegeing on a promise, but also because he was now cast in the role of the man who had closed the college.



The last faculty at St. Vincent's College, 1910-1911. Back row, left to right: W. Ponet, J. Allenbach, P. McDonnell, S. O'Callaghan, T. Lilley, M. O'Brien, D. Duggan, S. Depta, Jos. McAuliff, James Cody; Front row: W. Gorrel, J. Glass, T. Devine.

*Courtesy of DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives,
DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL*

Rockliffe was adamant about not accepting a college program. Conaty's efforts at compromise were only partly successful. The Jesuits agreed to open with a full four-year high school in September 1911. Despite Conaty's express wish that the new institution be called Saint Vincent's, the lack of continuity between the two schools made that impossible. In 1918 it formally became Loyola high school and university. The board of trustees and the parish of Saint Vincent de Paul remained in existence. Glass stayed on as pastor of the parish until his appointment as bishop of Salt Lake City in 1915. How or why a relatively obscure pastor in Los Angeles was given that post is not clear. At his death in 1926 the diocesan finances were found to be in a thoroughly muddled condition. Glass's bequest to Saint Vincent's parish was a debt that in 1919 reached over \$200,000. Interest payments alone were \$1640 a month, and the superior, Father James MacRoberts, had to borrow \$20,000 in three years just to meet them. Father Patrick McHale, the superior general's commissary on special visitation, commented "just how

one succeeded in accumulating a debt of this kind in this city is the secret of Msgr. Glass, at present the Bishop of Salt Lake."²⁰ The secret remained his because no financial records have survived from Saint Vincent's College. The accusation that Glass deliberately destroyed them is quite plausible.

The suddenness and unexpectedness of the closure caused endless speculation. The belief grew, and was widely accepted, that Saint Vincent's had been sacrificed to save DePaul and Dallas. According to one observer, "'Why is it,' they ask, 'that the most effective college and the one that is longest established, is handed over so that the confreres and money can be placed in the two schools that have no future?'"²¹ The claim that the parish missions would benefit from the closing rang hollow, since no priest from Saint Vincent's ever went on the mission band, nor was the work of the missions augmented in any way. Six of the college faculty remained in the parish, one went to Kenrick Seminary in Saint Louis, and the rest supplied for manpower shortages in other houses. The situation was well summarized



St. Vincent's Church and School. Los Angeles, Cal. No date, no publisher.

*Courtesy of DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives,
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²⁰ McHale to Verdier, 29 October 1918, Microfilm of American materials (to 1935) in the Archives of the General Curia, Rome: Series A, rolls 1, 2; Series B, rolls 3, 4, 5; Series C, reels 1, 2, 3; Series D, rolls 1, 2 (hereinafter GCUSA), series D, roll 2.

²¹ Rapport de J.J. Martin, supérieur de Cape Girardeau, avril 1911, GCUSA, series B, roll 5, item 618.

by Father Charles Souvay, who later became superior general. "It would be interesting to know on whom the responsibility for this critical situation [in Los Angeles] falls and I believe that an attentive study of what was done there would not contribute to putting a halo on the present bishop of Salt Lake City."²²

There was no single cause for the demise of Saint Vincent's College. It was due in part to the fact that Los Angeles, which had tripled its population in one decade, had outgrown the small high school and college that the Vincentians directed. Bishop Conaty realized the need for something more in the way of Catholic education, although his dream of a second Catholic University of America on the west coast was unrealistic and was certainly never realized by Loyola University. The resources of the Vincentian Community would not have permitted them to undertake such a venture. All of this dovetailed conveniently with Glass's desire to cover his own speculations and financial adventures, although he was probably sincere in seeing the missions as an alternative. The longstanding oral tradition that Saint Vincent's College was sacrificed to save the University of Dallas cannot be documented. It should be noted, however, that despite claims advanced by Finney and Glass that withdrawal from Saint Vincent's would presage the phasing out of the other colleges, this did not happen. In fact it was never seriously considered. On the contrary, the Province clung tenaciously to Dallas and DePaul despite the financial drain. Finney and Glass may well have been manipulating each other — the former to help the other universities, the latter to extricate himself from a difficult situation. The eventual demise of Saint Vincent's College was probably inevitable, but in 1911 it was neither necessary nor unavoidable.

The tawdry nature of the closing of Saint Vincent's College after forty-six years of existence should not obscure the fact that it was an important and pioneering venture. It was the first institution of higher learning in Southern California and was the only one for fifteen years. Even when it no longer held a monopoly, its prestige remained high. Graduates of Saint Vincent's featured prominently among the state's leaders. Alumni testified to their esteem and affection for the school, feelings that were shared by many Vincentians.

²² Souvay to Verdier, 6 January 1919, GCUSA, series D, roll 2.