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Postcards from the Past: DePaul University

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Postcards from the Past - DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois -

ESSAY

BY

EDWARD R. UDOVIC, C.M., PH.D.

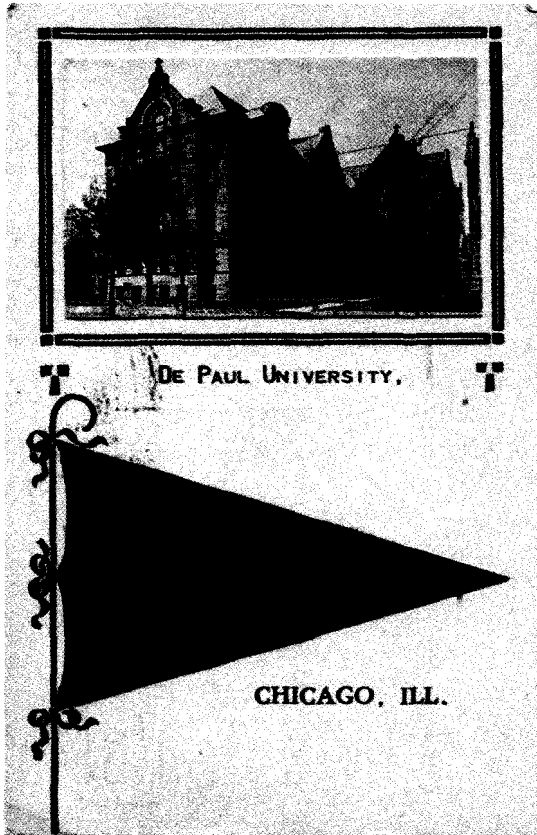
The Vincentians first came to Chicago in 1875 to found Saint Vincent de Paul parish at what was then the city's semi-rural northern boundary, not far from the limits reached by the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Adjacent to the busy Chicago River on the west, the neighborhood underwent dense residential and industrial development spurred by the completion of the nearby elevated train tracks in the 1890s. A magnificent new church was completed in 1897 to serve the largely Irish immigrants of the neighborhood. This left empty the old multi-purpose church building at the corner of Webster and Osgood Avenues.

At the urging of the archbishop of Chicago, Patrick A. Feehan, the Vincentians opened Saint Vincent's College in the fall of 1898 under the presidency of the Reverend Peter Vincent Byrne, C.M. Rechartered

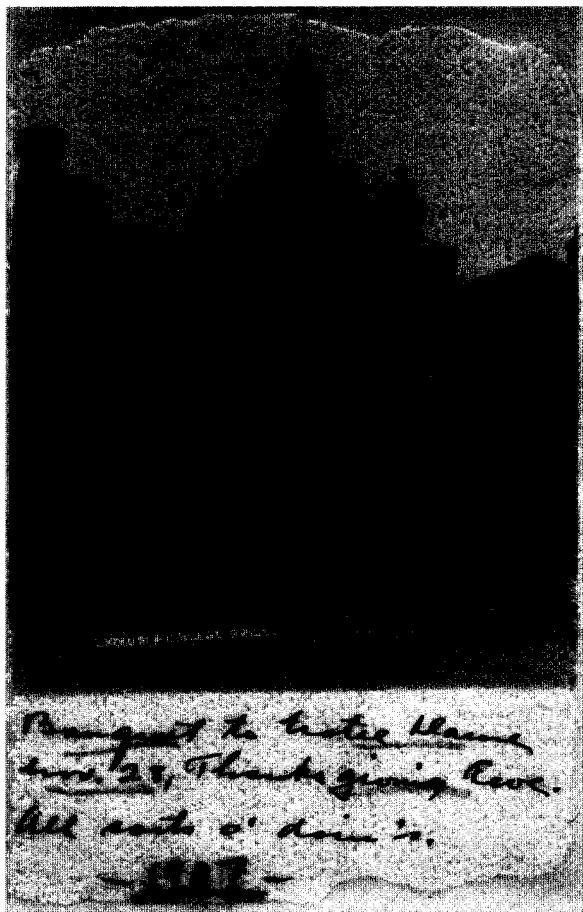


College Theatre, Sheffield Ave., Chicago. Published by Franklin Post Card Co., Chicago, Ill. Postmarked 28 August 1909.

Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, Illinois



DePaul University, Chicago, Ill. Published by C.R. Childs Company, Chicago.
Postmarked 11 July 1913.
Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, Illinois



Lyceum and College Grill. Dated 1907.

Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, Illinois

in 1909 as DePaul University the new college, and then university, represented the continuing involvement of the Congregation of the Mission in Catholic higher education in the United States.¹

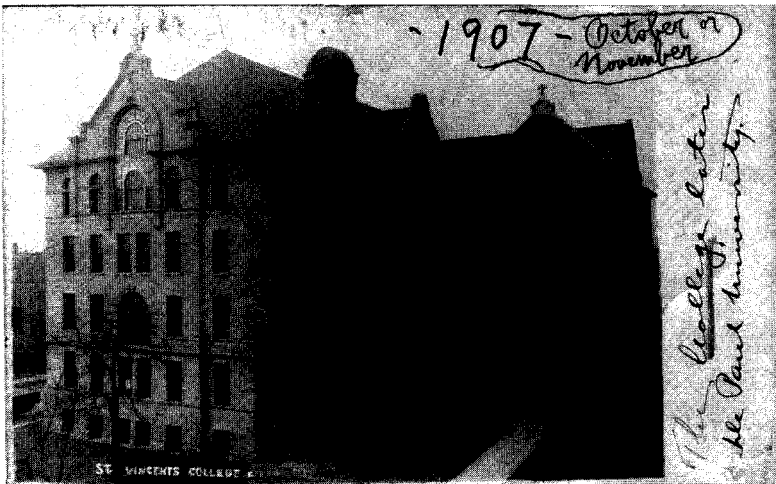
This involvement began with lay colleges at Saint Mary's of the Barrens in Perryville, Missouri (founded 1818) and Saint Vincent's

¹ For more information on the history of the Vincentian involvement in American higher education see, Stafford Poole, C.M., "The Educational Apostolate: Colleges, Universities and Secondary Schools," in *The American Vincentians: A Popular History of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States 1815-1987*, John E. Rybolt, C.M., ed. (New York: New City Press, 1987).

College in Cape Girardeau, Missouri (founded in 1843). These were followed by Niagara University, Niagara, New York (1856); Saint Vincent's College, Los Angeles, California (1865); Saint John's University, Brooklyn, New York (1870); and the University of Dallas, Dallas, Texas (1907).

The foundation of DePaul University came at a time when American higher education was undergoing a transformation spurred by the recent establishment of the University of Chicago by John D. Rockefeller. It did not take Catholics long to realize that the exclusivity of higher education in America denied equal educational opportunities to the immigrant and working class masses who were flooding cities in the United States in the wave of pre-World War I immigration.

Thus DePaul was founded with the inclusivist mission of seeking to provide the opportunity for higher education, and thus access to the fabled "American Dream," to a variety of underserved and underrepresented urban populations. Beginning with little more than this noble mission the university struck out boldly, and at great financial risk, to create an institution that lived up to the ideals of its patron, Saint Vincent de Paul.²



St. Vincent's College. Dated 1907.

Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, Illinois

² For a history of DePaul University see, John R. Ruiy and Charles S. Suchar, eds., *DePaul University: Centennial Essays and Images* (Chicago: DePaul University, 1998).

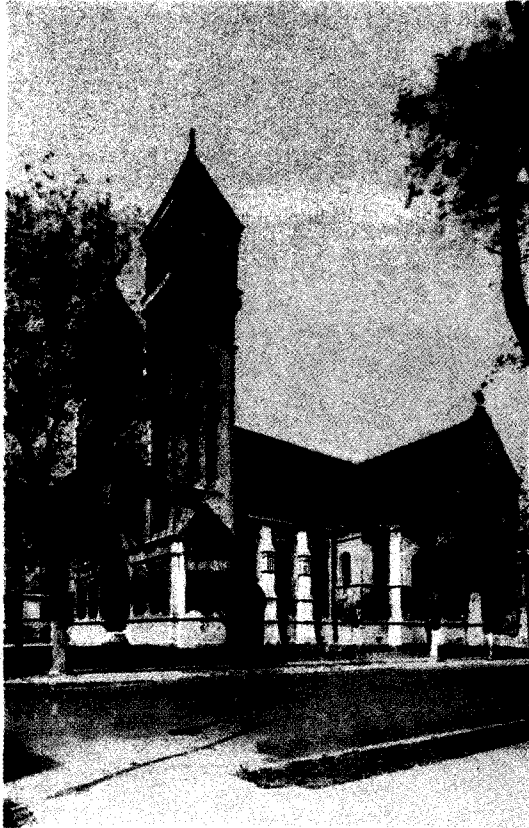
Whether it was with the admission of women, members of racial and religious minorities, working students who could only attend classes on a part-time basis in the evening, or non-traditional adult students DePaul has continued to focus its time, energy and resources on creating a distinctively Vincentian university experience for its generations of students. The institution has always understood the transformative power of education, represented by the diploma handed with such ceremony to its graduates. As higher education is the single most effective means of lifting persons out of the dead-ends so often imposed by poverty, discrimination, prejudice, class, economy and culture the stakes for the university's success have always been high.

The university has grown from a tiny one building neighborhood institution, once described proverbially as the "little school under the El." Over the last 105 years DePaul has developed large campus operations in Lincoln Park and Chicago's Loop, and in a variety of suburban locations, to support its nine schools and colleges and its more than 23,000 students. The last decade has witnessed an unprecedented period of growth which has left DePaul the largest Catholic university in the United States, and the seventh largest private university nationwide.



Rothschild & Company, Chicago. Published by V.O. Hammon Publishing Co., Chicago. Renovated and reopened as the DePaul Center, 1992. Loop Campus. Postmarked 22 July 1912.

Vinciantiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, Illinois



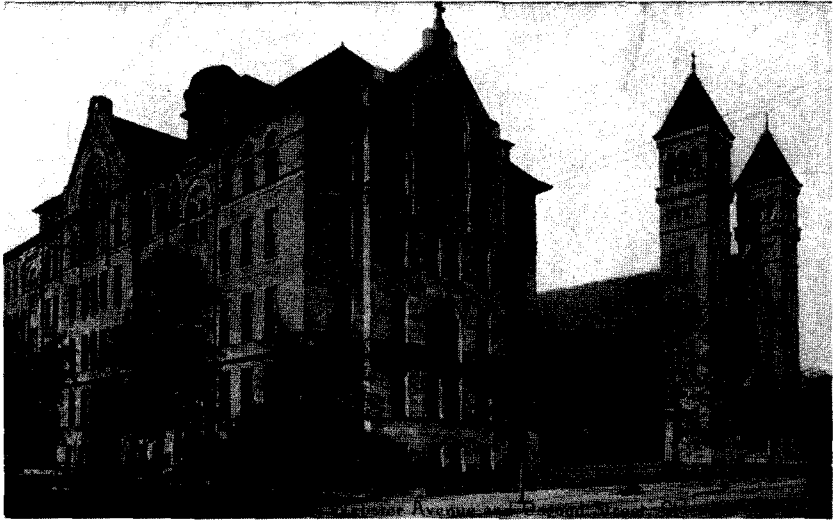
**CHURCH OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL
WEBSTER AND SHEFFIELD AVENUES CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

Church of St. Vincent de Paul. Webster and Sheffield Avenues, Chicago, Illinois.

Caption on back: "Solid, massive and withal magnificent is the College Church of Saint Vincent de Paul. Here human artistry and Divine truths combine to Give to the sons and daughters of de Paul as well as to the people of St. Vincent's Parish the food for a Spiritual Growth that will withstand the shock of error and of the materialism of the age."

N.D., believed to be 1930s.

Vincetiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, Illinois



De Paul, Webster Avenue and Osgood Street, Chicago.
 Published by C.R. Childs Company, Chicago, N.D., believed to be 1907-1910.
Vincetiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, Illinois

DePaul University certainly represents a success story in the annals of Catholic and American higher education. Its century of success can clearly be attributed to the fact that everything it has done has been guided by its distinctive Catholic, Vincentian and urban identity, represented by the compelling adjective of DePaul in its title.



Depaul University and Church, Webster Ave., Chicago.
 Published by Franklin Post Card Co., Chicago, Ill. Postmarked October 1908.
Vincetiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, Illinois



De Paul University, 1010 Webster Avenue. Chicago, Illinois. Caption on back: "The Administration Building. This unit of DePaul, erected in 1907 in harmony with the ideals of the Campus, devotes its space to the administrative offices and to the living quarters of the Faculty. The DePaul University charter was issued by the secretary of the state of Illinois the same year." N.D., believed to be 1907-1910.

Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, Illinois