October 18, 1972

Dear Friend:

We know you will enjoy this special publication which has emerged from the work of Jim O'Donnell. If you would like additional copies, please let me know. Thank you again for your help in so many things.

Best wishes,

Jim Pegolotti

JP/sd
enc.
Jesuit College In Jersey City

SPECIAL CENTENNIAL YEARBOOK PREFACE

ST. PETER’S COLLEGE first split
the cultural darkness in a gleaming
spurt of Jesuit missionary adrena-
lin—a luminous vision of systematized
mind-training according to the proved
canons of Greece and Rome and their
medieval heirs. The date was April 3,
1872. What blackrobes and a Garden
State charter endowed that day with the
all-embracing academic authority of a
university—in the name of the “rock”
upon which the Catholic Church was
founded—was a legal and historical
freak. For despite the sweeping terms of
that charter and the unshakable founda-
tion represented by its namesake, there
were no St. Peter’s College buildings or
teachers—much less St. Peter’s College
courses or students. In other words, St.
Peter’s College, 1872, existed in fancy
longhand script on a slice of parchment,
nowhere else.

On July 26, about three months later,
the college’s board of trustees secured
property for a building on the northeast
corner of Van Vorst and Grand Streets,
Jersey City. Though the Jesuits had not
gotten a college building up, they were
nevertheless anxious to get classes start-
ed. Seton Hall was already in operation,
but it served principally as a diocesan
seminary. The Jesuits were certain that
students would register at their St. Pe-
ter’s for either the classical B.A. or the
commercial program. Imagine their sur-
prise, then, when hardly anybody signed
up at all!

What the Jesuits had overlooked was
that the $61-per-year tuition they were
asking for was nothing less than a small
fortune to an 1872 Catholic family in
Jersey City. Also, there were few public
high schools and no parochial high
schools in the area. Most young guys just
weren’t prepared for accounting manuals
or the untranslated texts of the Greek
and Latin classics. The Jesuits therefore
postponed the college opening year after
year, until they decided to open a Prepar-
atory Department—at a reduced rate of
$50-a-year—that would ready students
for more difficult work.
On May 25, 1877, a long thick iron spike slipped into a soft bed of mud and ooze on Grand Street, and the building of St. Peter’s College got underway. A year later, May, 1878, Bishop Michael Corrigan came in from Newark to spread the mortar over the final St. Peter’s College stone, a cornerstone.

Classes started on Monday, September 2, 1878, at 9 a.m., with Rev. George Kenny, S.J., president. Seventy-one students were present that day—the enrollment was to grow to 123 by the end of the school year. Most of them were Irish and came from families in the neighborhood. Ages ranged from ten to fifteen; none of them started off doing college-level studies. It was more like high school work. First student on roster: Francis E. Agnew. He flunked out after four years.

Rev. John McQuaid, S.J., was appointed president in 1880. The first non-academic organizations founded in Jesuit colleges were by tradition the sodalities, and St. Peter’s started its first sodality on October 4, 1879. Then an Alumni Association of St. Peter’s High School was formed eight years later—though there had not yet been a St. Peter’s graduation. The Association was started on April 17, 1887, mainly as an Alumni Sodality.

From 1888 to 1891, Rev. Peter Cassidy, S.J., was president. He presided at the college’s first graduation on June 22, 1889; four students received their degrees that day: Albert B. Bising, Thomas J. Fox, Patrick F. Kirwen, John J. Niven. Half the graduates—Fox and Niven—received master’s degrees a year later for attending two lectures per week in “higher philosophy.” The first high school graduation was in 1911, with twenty-three receiving diplomas.

Rev. John Harpes, S.J., glided through one of the most architecturally constructive periods of St. Peter’s Parish, Jersey City, when he was president from 1891 to 1900. During Fr. Harpes’ term, a new church was consecrated, a new school building was erected and the parochial school was enlarged. Also, in 1896, the Board of Regents of the State of New York approved St. Peter’s College, thereby certifying the training background of law and medical graduates.

Work began on the new school building on Grand Street in March, 1899. A cornerstone was fit into the building on June 12; occupation of the place started just after Easter. This building included St. Peter’s Hall—the site of most social functions for years to come—and was a tremendous lift for students and teachers who had been operating out of broom-closet classrooms in the basement of St. Peter’s Church.

JERSEY CITY swung into the Twentieth Century like a locomotive swerving along a mountain-side in an early TV western—a long, black mill beating a thunderous path, its exhaust-pipe smokestack fuming filth, a creature from the depths walling and thrashing in peristaltic churns through the Garden of Jersey.

Yes, in 1900 St. Peter’s College had a window on a locomotive that did everything a locomotive is supposed to do but more. Look through the second-floor window from a classroom on Grand Street. (“Uh, keep the window closed, will ‘ya . . .”) Factory waste of sodden smoke and black cinder sits outside in one big reeking heart-clot of funk. Heavy coal carts and myriad New York supply trucks rumble by on the street below. Trains and trolleys, horse-carriages and cranked-up autos rush headlong into a madman century of speed, mass-think, the machine.

In 1900, four percent of America’s college-age group was in college; by the start of World War II, it was fourteen out of every hundred. St. Peter’s College by 1900 had granted sixty three ABs and twenty-six MAs. From 1900 to mid-1902, Rev. Joseph Zwing, S.J., was president of the college—a school on a speeding, reeking, madman thoroughfare.

LIVING CONDITIONS at St. Peter’s College were not the best in the early 1900s. Work on the school’s physical handicaps began on July 2, 1902, when Rev. Joseph Fox, S.J., became president of the college and pastor of St. Peter’s Parish—the college was closely linked with the parish during this period. Though the parish was every day becoming more industrialized and more lower-middle-class than middle, St. Peter’s Church on Grand Street was doing well.

In the summer of 1903, Fr. Fox renovated the interior of St. Peter’s Hall. Then he worked on the basement of the church. Between 1902 and 1905, Fr. Fox bought two lots adjoining the college and one of them was leveled off to make a playground.

St. Peter’s College was accredited by the New Jersey Board of Education in October, 1905. A clear-cut distinction was made that year between the college and St. Peter’s High School; they had been operating in the same building and under the same administration. The enrollments in both institutions were adequate—the school was easily accessible with trolleys in the area—and most graduates had settled down.

Rather than sit back and watch things move just adequately along, Fr. Fox attempted to fatten up future enrollment figures by starting a school that would train students for the sort of work done at St. Peter’s College. So in August, 1905, Fr. Fox bought Manresa Hall on the corner of Summit Avenue and Montgomery Street, about a mile west of the college. This spot, incidentally, is now the site of the Jersey City Armory, which the college has been negotiating to buy for the past three years.

It became a private grammar school, and believe it or not, the seed of what was to become the St. Peter’s College Reserve Officer’s Training Program was planted here. From a 1904 Church Bulletin: “A cadet corps with suitable uniform will be organized under the charge of an efficient drill-master.”

From 1907 to 1911, Rev. Edward Magrath, S.J., enjoyed one of the quietest presidential terms since the first cave-man picked a leader. And by the time Rev. Joseph Mulry, S.J., succeeded him as college president in 1911, a sermon had been added to every sodality service. A cornerstone was placed into a St. Peter’s College “clubhouse” on the corner of Warren and Grand Streets on June 22, 1913. One reason Fr. Mulry obtained the clubhouse was to make more room for the expanding student body. So part of the building was fitted out with makeshift classrooms for some of the high school students. The clubhouse was later called Mulry Hall.
Let us not look back in anger, nor forward in fear, but around in awareness.

—James Thurber
The school year, 1913-14, was the last before World War I began to change the fates of American college students. St. Peter’s College and Prep were flourishing that year with a combined student total of 415. The college had a football team—though not a very successful one by the tone of one priest's 1913 diary entry: "Yesterday—football game at Seton Hall. We were defeated as usual 14-6." But it seems St. Peter's students offset their athletic inability by excelling in another area. Here is a headline from a Jersey City newspaper of 1913: "St. Peter’s Prom Social Triumph of Winter Season."

Almost every historical sketch of St. Peter’s College ever written tells you that the college closed down from 1918 to 1930 because of World War I. One edition of the Peacock Pie, the school yearbook, gives this dramatic account: "The classrooms went empty. The faculty closed their markbooks, and left for the battlefield. The students had thrown aside the academic black to don khaki for the flag that had floated above the school for two score years."

Timeout. True, classes did officially stop in 1918—though three juniors of that year were permitted to return as seniors and graduate in 1919; and, yes, St. Peter's College did not operate again until September 22, 1930. But the reason the school closed down was not World War I. The real reason was that the Jesuits wanted to concentrate their strength on other colleges—such as Georgetown, Boston College, Fordham. They were, in a sense, robbing Peter's to pay all.

Rev. James McDermott, S.J., St. Peter's president from 1915 to 1921, had not even thought that his school was threatened. The Jesuit Provincial (chief) had promised a full faculty for St. Peter's if Fr. McDermott acquired a new site with athletic facilities. In, say, a sentence, how could you sum up the principle that left St. Peter's stunted for twelve years? Rev. Joseph Dinneen, S.J., did it in a 1935 memo to another Jesuit Provincial. Fr. Dinneen was president of the college at the time he wrote the memo.

Rev. George Kenny, S.J.
First St. Peter's College President
The key is the last sentence of the following paragraph which was, ironically—for all its directness and honesty—set in parenthesis: "(The history of the College from 1878 to 1918 is full of instances where higher superiors assigned and withdrew a Jesuit faculty for St. Peter's arbitrarily. On one occasion, when Provincial asked for a Professor of Philosophy, he withdrew the teachers of Poetry and Rhetoric; the College Department closed for the year, and then tried to build up again. 'The Province football' was St. Peter's.)"

When the college finally reopened in 1930, the United States was mired waist-deep in the swamp of a great depression. Income from investments of educational institutions was vanishing every day. Consequently, classes had to be held temporarily in the Chamber of Commerce Building, 1 Newark Avenue, Jersey City. The students of St. Peter's High School had long ago filled the Grand Street schoolhouse to capacity.

"Though the world fall about him in ruins, his head will remain unbowed," the Latin orator Horace once wrote, and St. Peter's College—with its Greek and Latin classical curriculum—turned the fourth floor of the Chamber of Commerce Building into the Chamber of Horace. It also turned a public stenographer's office into a library. The Physics Department was a mezzanine of what used to be a clothing store. May devotions were held on the building's sloping roof, around which a fence was constructed to keep students from falling off.

Some classes were actually seven times wider than they were deep. Right as you came into the building, you couldn't miss Stefanie the Secretary—she ignored you most of the time. A clerical sentry in the lobby guided you to the elevator. Then you got into your classroom and sat down and concentrated louder than the roaring Pennsylvania Railroad, louder than the guy on the street shouting Potatoes!, louder than the rattle of the Grove Trolley on its way to Hoboken. If you could.

On August 16, 1930, eighty-five students registered for courses at St. Peter's College. The first freshman class in twelve years opened on September 22 with six faculty members and a Mass. What was the student like? He considered a night on the town a double-feature at the Rialto and a double extra-thick malted milk shake. American Magazine took a survey of young people and concluded, "From the collective attitudes expressed, it would seem that the youth of the Thirties wanted nothing short of—or more than—a life bounded on the one side by the Boy Scout Manual and on the other by the Book of Common Prayer."

At the re-opening Mass in September of 1930, Rev. Robert Gannon, S.J., dean, told the students: "Our first interest is the advancement of learning among the undergraduates. The college man is our chief concern. For we have no private careers to carve for ourselves. We should feel it a mockery of our vocation to sacrifice the advancement of the boys to our own development or comfort. The classroom is to us what the Indies were to St. Francis Xavier.

"We specialize," he continued, "in educating the undergraduate and our whole idea of education is distinctively different and much more simple than medieval methods. We are medieval enough to think that there is more education in a few subjects thoroughly taught than in a multiplication of courses."

Dean Gannon molded the academic, ecumenical, moral and spiritual character of St. Peter's College. He favored liberal arts study over science and business, and envisioned St. Peter's as a below-600-student liberal arts Academy that would sail along smoothly without big-time sports. In 1930, this character was consummate—students, lay teachers, Jesuit instructors and administrators mirrored it. Over the years, of course, it has lost its grip in varying degrees at every level, except at the root institutional level where in some aspects it is still part of St. Peter's College.

"Following a system of education that dates back to the days of the European Renaissance," said a 1932 newspaper clipping, "the Greek and Latin Academies of St. Peter's College will convene April 17 at the Hotel Plaza and will be publicly examined by authorities from many of the largest universities in the East in the 10 tragedies of Seneca and the 10 Greek orations of the premier orator of Athens, Demosthenes."

St. Peter's first military chapter was this class of private grammar school students in 1914. They were part of a Cadet Corps at Manresa Hall. This is a picture of their First Communion Day.

1914 Church Bulletin
The pride of the Peacock is the glory of God.

—William Blake

Then in 1933 the juniors of St. Peter’s College presented what was called a “minor logic specimen,” another sort of display of learning. According to a report in the school newspaper, the Pauw Wow, the juniors wore caps and gowns—not ordinary gowns of course; not the flowing kimonos that are common to American Colleges and high schools, but new length English gowns of special make that are to be part of the tradition at St. Peter’s: real undergraduate gowns designed in the 16th Century for Christ’s College in Cambridge.”

Yes, Cambridge. You read it right. That was one of a surfeit of European traditions that Fr. Gannon brought to St. Peter’s College. Today’s traditional Michaelmas Convocation at the college goes back to 1931 when Fr. Gannon suggested that students gather each year on the feast of St. Michael for a Mass of the Holy Ghost—once a practice at the 13th Century University of Paris.

In mid-December of 1930, Fr. Gannon picked the peacock as St. Peter’s College’s symbol. He chose the peacock for a number of reasons—foremost was that in mythology the peacock committed itself to the flames of a funeral pyre and then was reborn bestowed with even more beauty. To Fr. Gannon, the myth apparently seemed a recherché parallel of St. Peter’s College, which to the public at large had “died” in the flames of World War I and now “rose” again in blue and white, hopefully with even more academic embellishment, or “beauty.”

Moreover, Fr. Gannon slipped the ambitious designation, “Million Dollar Faculty,” into the local papers to spotlight the college’s desire for academic excellence.

The seal of the college was also designed in 1930. It was a peacock surmounting a rock, a couple of crossed keys and the legend, “In perpetuum.” The peacock is symbolic of the soul finding immortality after death; the rock symbolizes St. Peter as the “rock” upon which the church is built; the keys represent the keys to heaven; and the words, “In perpetuum,” denote the hope of going on forever. The titles of some St. Peter’s College activities and societies go back to the peacock myth—such as the highest academic society, the Most Noble Order of the Peacock; the yearbook, the Peacock Pie; and the once-popular Juno Symphony Club.

As a public figure, Fr. Gannon was at his most dynamic in his after-breakfast, lunch and dinner speeches—he was the college’s ace deipnosophist, floating up in his black cassock to the microphone at the helm of one after another dining table and weighing rancor against the evils of materialistic hedonism or the inner crumbling of educational institutions. Some of Fr. Gannon’s speeches have genuine historical value. St. Peter’s College was weaned during its infancy on the collective attitude and tone of those speeches.

I n 1931, the first sophomore class of the recently resurrected St. Peter’s College made the freshmen wear blue and white bands, and submit to “Freshman Rules.” A clipping from a 1931 newspaper tells what the rules were: “Although the freshmen are not allowed to smoke in the smoking room, they must be supplied at all times with matches to light the cigar or pipe of a dignified sophomore. . . . Freshmen must at all times give way to the wishes of the lordly sophs and must answer with a respectful ‘Yes, sir’ or ‘No, sir’ when spoken to.”

By September 20, 1931, St. Peter’s College was working out of the fifth and sixth floors, as well as the fourth, of the downtown Chamber of Commerce Building. The name of the first black student to come to St. Peter’s was Hudson Oliver. He was the son of a New York physician and started classes in 1934. Also in 1934, the college had its first graduation since reopening.
Though uncertain where it was going to build, St. Peter's College launched a drive for building funds at an Alumni Banquet on May 14, 1931. About 500 graduates attended the banquet in the grand ballroom of New York's Hotel Astor. A committee had been formed to conduct the building-fund drive, and that night it officially got its head: Mayor Frank Hague.

According to a newspaper clipping, the Mayor was "greeted with long and loud applause" as he approached the speaker's microphone at the banquet. "I cannot observe the sincerity of Fr. Joseph O'Reilly," said Frank Hague. Fr. O'Reilly had been St. Peter's president since 1925 and was to leave in three months. Continued Hague: "I have been interested in St. Peter's and have looked upon its graduates as my personal friends." He concluded with the words: "I accept the chairmanship of the committee—I have never lost a fight in my life." Fr. O'Reilly also spoke: "St. Peter's stands for all that is high and noble in life. Its mission is to prepare men to be citizens of heaven and earth."

St. Peter's College purchased its present estate for $200,000 from Mr. Edward Young on October 9, 1933. Its Boulevard frontage was 303 feet; depth was 510 feet down Montgomery Street, and 125 feet down Glenwood Avenue. The deal was $100,000 down, balance to be paid in two years at three percent interest.

The campus began to take shape in 1934. On January 11, Fr. Dinneen started a "Buy a Brick" campaign. The campaign's most successful thrust was in its drive to get started on the college's first building—no, not a lecture hall or a library or a chapel. A gym. The reason: a gym would furnish space for future fund-raising affairs.

At 2 p.m. on September 28, 1934, ground was broken for "Collins" Gym—named after Rev. Patrick Marley Collins, Teacher and prefect at the college from 1879 to 1934, he was the "golden link" between the old college and the new. The building, which was to cost $55,000, was the first of an intermediate plan for three buildings. The final plan also included a chapel, library and faculty residence. On November 24, Fr. Dinneen had a $55,000 smile on his face and Mayor Frank Hague on his left as the cornerstone of Collins Gym was wedged into place.
To
Franklin Delano Roosevelt
President of the United States
Greeting

Unselfish service is the truest greatness.

On this day when the President of the United States sig- nally honors the people of Jersey City by his visit to lay the cornerstone of the new addition to our justly famed Medical Center, conceived and developed by that humanitarian, our Mayor, Frank Hague, and now about to be completed through the aid of the Federal Government in the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

It is fitting that all good citizens of Jersey City and every agency of our great city should join in grateful acknowledgment of this visit of our President and in thanksgiving for this great Center for the lessening of disease and pain and, therefore,

We of St. Peter’s College who just sixty-five years ago were invited to Jersey City by another Roosevelt, your kinsman, Bishop J. Roosevelt Bayley, to hand on to its young men the torch of knowledge, and today, by a happy coincidence, are opening on the Boulevard a new College.

In our own name, and in that of all our fellow-educators in Jersey City, give you, Mr. President, a welcome that shall never fade, and we pledge you and your successors a service that shall never falter.

Joseph D. Dinneen, S.J.
President, St. Peter’s College

Jersey City, New Jersey.
October Second.
Nineteen Hundred Thirty Six.

Scroll given to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on October 2, 1936, by Rev. Joseph Dinneen, president of St. Peter’s College.
Next came a series of card parties to get Gannon Hall built. “Before long,” according to Fr. Gannon, “just by putting one card party on top of another, two more buildings were added to the gymnasium and preparation set on foot to take possession during the summer months.”

When St. Peter’s College started classes in 1935, the building fund still needed $135,000. In mid-October, Fr. Dinneen received permission to personally solicit funds until January 1 of ’36. Through the 1935 school year, the college’s freshmen once a week walked up to Collins Gym for physical training.

This weekly walk, said Rev. John Larkin, S.J., who graduated from St. Peter’s in 1938, was “the bridgehead of our invasion of the richer section uptown.”

FINANCIAL problems compelled St. Peter’s College to start an evening business division in 1932. It was called Hudson College and was the precursor of today’s School of Business Administration.

“Conceived as a program of adult, evening education,” said Rev. Dennis Comey, S.J., former St. Peter’s College president, “highlighting Business Administration and Accounting, Hudson College was at least partially motivated as a means of losing the burdensome rent paid for the use of quarters in the Chamber of Commerce Building. Purposeful young men, employed during the day, attended evening classes and strove mightily to meet the exacting demands of St. Peter’s College.”

Hudson College’s classes started at 5:30 p.m. and ended at 9 p.m. The initial enrollment of forty-one included five women who had been accepted, according to President Dinneen, “in good faith when it was thought women students were eligible.” But coeduction of even five proved too much for the Jesuit Provincial who quickly nixed it. There were seven professors the first year. They taught a total of eleven courses. By the end of that year there were sixty-three students and seventeen courses.

The college was an unaccredited institution offering three programs: a four-to-six year course leading to a certificate in commercial science; a two-year program for pre-law students; and, lastly, a course of studies for students who were returning to school to learn about finance in the business world.

Until this time, northern New Jersey had only elementary business schools. Hudson College—besides being the only Catholic business college in the state—was the first in the area to offer advanced courses that lead to a degree of Bachelor of Commercial Science. Such a degree could be the key to a business management or CPA career.

Hudson College’s first graduation was in 1936—total of five students, three of them women.

S YES, PETER’S had done well in its temporary Newark Avenue quarters. Between 1930 and 1935, students from ninety-two high schools and 101 towns and cities had crammed into the St. Peter’s College register. The enrollment in 1935 in the day college was 374—a full house considering the 32 philosophy credits, 8 “Evidence in Religion” credits and average of 20 chemistry credits that the curriculum exacted from every student as part of its core. And the evening division had swelled to 194 students.

Moreover, on November 29, 1935, the Middle States Evaluation Committee accredited St. Peter’s College at its annual meeting in Atlantic City. The college was obviously coping with the difficult situation, but Fr. Dinneen wanted to remove the difficulty. On February 5, 1935, Collins Gym opened with a junior prom. The event signaled the two-mile move from Newark Avenue to a permanent home on the Boulevard.

Classes started at the present site on September 24, 1936. Four hundred students who preferred a glass of milk to a cup of coffee, two to one, convened at Gannon Hall and the Arts Building on the Boulevard with twenty Jesuits and twenty lay teachers. Ground had been broken for the two buildings on March 27, 1936. The Gannon structure is four stories of colonial brick and limestone on a steel frame. The Arts Building was one floor of temporary classrooms; students called it “Railroad Hall” and “The Bowling Alley” because of its long waxed tunnel-like corridor. Today, Gannon Hall—named after Fr. Gannon, the former dean—houses science labs and lecture halls. The Arts Building was demolished in the mid-50s to make room for Dinneen Hall.

Life on the Boulevard provided some pleasant changes—like clean facilities, fresh sawdust and wet paint. They probably held courses in Crate Opening and Desk Moving through the first two weeks. St. Peter’s College was paying for its new home with land sales, loans and fundraising programs.
Two of the big events of the 1936-37 year were the giving of a scroll to President Franklin D. Roosevelt on October 2, '36, and the series of spelling bees on radio station WIZ in which some St. Peter's students had the opportunity to win the “unbelievable” top prize of $64. The freshmen of that year—who like all the freshmen before them since 1931 had to wear beanies and were subjugated to the wills of the sophomores—were the first students to try to start a fraternity in St. Peter's College.

The college had its first graduation on the Boulevard in Collins Gym on June 14, 1936.

“ONE fact may not be forgotten or ignored,” notes Rev. Dennis Comey, S.J., who became St. Peter's College president in 1937. “The 1937-1943 period of my incumbency was marked and marred by two external factors over which we had no control: widespread economic depression and World War II. Each of these caused severe economic problems. Even if an oversimplification, the major achievement of the 1937-1943 period may have been survival.”

When Fr. Comey took over as president on June 21, the college was shouldering a debt of $342,000, and charging $200 a year for tuition. He recalls: “To keep the college properly viable, administrative officers found it available and necessary to grant relief by reduced tuition.

“A modicum of help,” continued Fr. Comey, “was made available by the National Youth Administration, a federal agency then stressing a student work program. Other sources filtered money in the college. Gracious and generous contributions were made by the ladies, members of the Teresian Sodality. Within their means the Teacher's Sodality gave aid. Scattered gifts and honoraria for Jesuit services eased the burden. Several raffles, enthusiastically supported by college and prep students, enriched St. Peter's by some thousands of dollars. From time to time money was allocated to the college from a bingo program conducted in St. Peter's downtown Hall.”

In 1938, the Business Division, Hudson College, was approved by the Board of Regents of the University of New York. St. Peter's College entered January, 1940, with the first-ever Father and Son Night. They probably drove streetcars to the affair—in a few years most of the streetcars in the area were to be replaced by trolley-buses, and then by just plain rackety buses. Most students in the 40s, of course, didn't have their own cars to take to school. The few who did usually had used heaps that they regularly chugged up to four, six, maybe eight carpool stops. And when they got to school they always found a parking space.
Fr. Dinneen, St. Peter’s president, flashes smile, as cornerstone is wedged into place for Collins Gym, the present campus’s first building. Jersey City Mayor Frank Hague stands to his immediate left.

One thing almost every student did have, however, was a part-time job. Arthur Lenehan, class of ‘48, describes his part-time job at the downtown Jersey City research lab of Colgate Palmolive during his student days: “In effect, we gave our pores to science. The Colgate-Palmolive people were developing a deodorant. We sat around, shirtless, and perspired in a big, steam-heated, sparsely furnished room, equipped with chairs, magazines and newspapers, while men in white smocks moved among us, daubing various colorless concoctions on our upper arms. Then gadgets were hooked to our skin. Readings were taken from the gadgets and jottings were made in books. It was a good job. The company was pleasant and the banter was light.”

On December 7, 1941, yes, Pearl Harbor, Rev. Edward Coffey, S.J., former St. Peter’s College teacher and dean, was watching St. Peter’s students debate students from Marymount College. Says Fr. Coffey: “The attack on Pearl Harbor was dramatically announced in the middle of the debate.” The announcement stunned Fr. Coffey so much, apparently, that he still hadn’t felt its full impact even after the debate had ended. He remembers, in fact, being very displeased when the debate judge, a Jesuit from Ecuador, awarded his decision to Marymount.

“World War II,” says Fr. Comey, “and its concomitant Selective Service had a damaging impact. The overall effect was that the number of students attending St. Peter’s College dwindled to ninety, most of them taking an accelerated program in order to attain a degree before obligation to don a uniform.” By October 30, 1942, over 500 alumni were in the service. Students were regularly taking pre-induction physicals in front of the stage in Collins Gym.
Fr. Comey made two weighty academic changes in 1942. First, he ended postgraduate study at St. Peter’s by terminating the school’s chemistry master’s program. And second, he initiated an accelerated undergraduate program for the duration of the war; the normally four-year Arts and Science program was cut to three years, and Hudson College’s business program went from six years to four.

But Hudson College only made it into the last week of September, 1945. Writes Fr. Comey: “Hudson College became a wartime casualty. Students were older, clearly eligible for the draft. As current students and registrants vanished the decision had to be taken to close Hudson College. Grasping for any straw, the quarters occupied by Hudson College were leased to the Office of Price Administration. Rental money provided an acutely needed source of revenue.”

Okay; in the final analysis, Fr. Comey, just want did pull St. Peter’s College through the years 1937 to 1943? “St. Peter’s outlasted depression and war mainly because of service given by truly dedicated men: Jesuits graciously accepted their professed poverty; lay teachers outrageously underpaid, yet doggedly determined to preserve their loved college; unnumbered alumni and friends, concealing their own distress to embolden administrators, faculty, students.”

THE Jesuit Provincial, Rev. James Sweeney, S.J., friend of Rev. Vincent Hart, S.J., was actually apologetic in asking Fr. Hart to become president of St. Peter’s College in 1943—for the school was all but bankrupt.

Said Fr. Hart: “After a few days in office I succeeded in getting the Provincial’s promise not to bring up the subject of closing the college with his consular unless forced, that is, if we had to borrow money from the Province.” According to notes filed by Rev. George Hilsdorf, S.J., who interviewed Fr. Hart two years ago, “What gave Fr. Hart hope was the discovery that Brother Burke was netting $2,000 per week on BINGO. Fr. Hart arbitrarily split this three ways, Prep-Parish-College. It is his contention that Bingo was one of the essential factors in keeping the college in existence through those trying times.”

Since most of the St. Peter’s College men were in military uniforms, another “essential factor” that kept the college on its feet was the enrollment of 35 women in 1944. They were pre-clinical students serving probationary periods at St. James Hospital in Elizabeth and St. Francis Hospital in Jersey City as a Nurses Corps. The first black girl to attend St. Peter’s was in that Corps. “I still remember,” said Fr. Coffey recently, “the stir caused when one of the white students danced with her at one of the dances.”

The faculty carried enormous course loads during the years, 1943 to 1945. Recalls Rev. Joseph Murray, S.J.: “At one time I had thirty-two contact hours in addition to having charge of the bookstores, calling talks to churches every morning, and weekends as auxiliary chaplain to the coast guard.” Yet, says Fr. Murray, “never did we have any suspicion that the college would be closed.”

On September 1, 1944, St. Peter’s acquired a building across the Boulevard from the college, and the Jesuits, who had been commuting daily from downtown Grand Street finally became local residents. In 1945, the college had its lowest number of graduates since 1916: nine. But that was to change with a jolt.

Shortly after the summer of 1945,” recalls Rev. Theodore Zeegers, S.J., teacher at St. Peter’s from 1945 to 1960, “the war was over and ex-G.I. students began to come back to the college. The part that is most difficult for me to understand as I look back at those days is how we got them all indoors, considering the little room we had.”

Indeed: at St. Peter’s College, G.I. Joe was so fast taking advantage of the free education G.I. Bill promised him, that the enrollment soared to triple the pre-war figure. “The student body,” said an October, 1946, Pauw Wow, “has a very frank outlook on their future and that of their Alma Mater. Having spent several service years saying that they went to St. Peter’s, ‘a small Jesuit college in Jersey City,’ and being forced to clarify further by Fordham, they wanted to put their school on the national interest map. The makings of a strong basketball team has already raised their hopes. Intramural football teams have caused wide-spread excitement. The total of 1150 in St. Peter’s day and night sessions is a wonderful augury for the future.”

When Hudson College reopened in September, 1946, after being closed one year, many applicants said they’d like to take their courses during the day. That month fifty business students had their courses days as an experimental group. The experiment worked. In no time the New Jersey and New York State Boards of Regents approved the revised business curriculum for the degree of Bachelor of Science in Accounting, Management and Marketing.

But where was Fr. Hart to put all those intellectually aspiring veterans? After all, the St. Peter’s College campus consisted of three classroom buildings; a strip of regularly trimmed grass that stretched from the Boulevard down Montgomery Street to Gannon Hall; a few bushes and small trees; and a hedge. Following his interview with Fr. Hart, Fr. Hilsdorf noted that “with the return of veterans in large numbers a building was necessary. No money and a mortgage prevented borrowing. Mr. Edward O’Toole, because of his friendship with Fr. Leo Fey, S.J., then treasurer, retired this mortgage and McDermott Hall was built.”

The cornerstone for McDermott Hall—a three-story classroom building on the corner of Glenwood Avenue and the Boulevard—was laid on October 28, 1949. A Pauw Wow article that year referred to the new building as “the last word in modern functional design.” Additionally, St. Peter’s College got more room with the erection of a one-story brick building in 1947 called Memorial Hall. It extended westward from Collins Gym and became the armroom and supply room for the department of Military Science and Tactics.

The most prestigious organization at St. Peter’s College in 1947 was the debating team. And later between 1950 and 1962, the team qualified seven times for the West Point Debate Tourney—a sort of Super Mindbowl of college debating. In 1947, you could start off your day with Mass in the college chapel at 8:10 and 8:40 a.m.; have free lunch at the Glenwood Bar (students called it “McDermott’s”) at the foot of Glenwood Avenue on West Side Avenue (Don’t go looking for it, Jack; there’s a parking lot there now); and knock off the whole year in June with the annual boat ride to Rye Playland, New York.

In October of 1948, the vets—and nonvets—of St. Peter’s College established a Student Council. Its job, according to the Pauw Wow, was “to run all student activities outside of lecture halls and labs.” The Council cranked its first official memo out of its mimeograph machine in May, 1948. It said that lettermen could wear sweaters in place of their suit coats, but that the regulations on shirts and ties still applied. “This reform,” the report concluded, “was approved by the dean.”
St. Peter's College cafeteria living, 1947-style.

Rev. Dennis Comey, S.J.

School newspaper staff of the late 1940s.

Nineteen-forty-nine varsity basketball team.

Rev. Vincent Hart, S.J.
On December 2, 1949, 1852 students at St. Peter’s College, Rev. James Shanahan, S.J., became president. He had taught at St. Peter’s from 1933 to 1936. That same year a graduate of the college way back in 1898, Joseph Fitzpatrick, reached almost unrivaled local prominence as the victorious manager of John V. Kenny’s mayoral campaign—Kenny replaced Frank Hague. Many say that Fitzpatrick was the school’s oldest alumnus when he died in 1970.

The St. Peter’s College Counselling and Guidance Center started in 1949. That year also marked the arrival of a literary magazine called *Pavan*—from one edition to the next, the most cogent reflection of the St. Peter’s College imagination this side of the Wizard of Oz.

Before the decade was out, St. Peter’s College, land of the peacock, was doing such a thriving business that it had two real peacocks brought on campus. They occupied a runway between Gannon Hall and the Arts Building. Remembering them, Rev. James Fischer, S.J., former math professor, smiled and said: “Every time they threw up their radiant tales, students would rush to the windows to watch, disrupting a number of my brilliant math lectures.”

Now to the student of the 50’s.

He walked to his classes in plain-toed black or brown leather shoes and dark socks. It was a self-assurant walk. His thin tie circled a collar of a white button-down cloth shirt. Jacket maybe a Harris tweed, until 1956, when it became a $32.50 Navy blue virgin wool St. Peter’s College blazer. With the school seal knitted on the upper left pocket. Wednesday his dress went dead-grass green military. Freshmen wore blue and white beanies their first few weeks, seniors wore sleeveless black knee-length robes.

He liked to smoke, but couldn’t at most places on campus. His hair was trimmed the length of a Spring Lake lawn in mid-August. Which is pret-ty short. If he was a frat chief, he dealt in pins and paddles, was probably on the brawny side, might even have been reared Ohio-west of Hudson County. Not what you’d call a cerebral titan—the only Greek he knew was the inscription on his fraternity beer mug. A “blackball meeting” wasn’t a discussion of last year’s one-wall AAU handball championship. And a “good kick” from a teacher didn’t mean he had given you a fast swig on a fifth of Southern Comfort.
The Fifties: A live peacock on campus and an alive team of proud basketball peacocks, being led to charge by Mr. Don Kennedy.

Above: Freshman sports his mandatory blue and white beanie. Left: yearbook caption reads, "P/R's stand at order arms awaiting the arrival of the Inspector General."
Just as numerous, however, were the professional students. His day in the sun (a very hot and sweaty day) was the senior-year “Orals”: a fifteen-minute session of philosophy quizzing of the senior class by two teachers. He spent his spare time in things like the Argus Eyes Play Club, which won several awards through the decade in drama competition, and the Gannon Debating Team, which beat Oxford and Cambridge. In 1950, St. Peter’s College added the College Entrance Examination Boards to its entrance requirements. President Shanahan that year watched the college’s first graduation during his term of office. He was president through the 50s.

A momentous day in the St. Peter’s College century was in 1950. Up to that year, the college’s basketball teams had played for the most part as if they were in clouds—their current status was a non-phenomenal 350th in the country. Then in June, a basketball coach named Don Kennedy came in (paddling a canoe? one wonders) from Long Island. A man of immense dedication and remarkable skills, he seeded the clouds of St. Peter’s College basketball with lightning. By 1959, the college was one of the nation’s top hundred.

Yearly May Devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the St. Peter’s College quadrangle.
Today, with the seventh best won-lost record of any college basketball coach in the nation, Don Kennedy stands as St. Peter's most influential non-academic figure. In 1930, Fr. Gannon furnished the college's academic plan: a non-athletic liberal arts powerhouse. Twenty years later, Coach Kennedy began turning Fr. Gannon's vision of a Greek and Latin classical Academy into a college that a varsity basketball team could be proud of.

In 1951, St. Peter's College had 852 students—427 day, 425 night. Six hundred of them enrolled in the college's first Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). The program was compulsory for freshmen and sophomores. A Public Relations Office was established in January. On April 12, Elsie Belin came to St. Peter's as a switchboard operator. She's still here, though you rarely see Elsie around. This might be so because some students at a 50s hop once told her that she was revealing her age by dancing the Charleston. All the same, Elsie Belin has given the college over twenty years of good connections.

Between 1934 and 1952, St. Peter's College graduates had won fifty scholarships. Fr. Shanahan set up a pre-dental and pre-med advisory committee in the spring—this was the beginning of the school's Graduate Scholarship Committee. In September, freshmen danced "Ring Around The Rosy" on a grass plot where the rock garden is now. They wore their jackets backward with blue and white beanies on their heads.
Above: Motorcade for St. Peter's College 1957 N.I.T. basketball team. Left: O'Reilly Hall—once a college office building behind McDermott Hall on Glenwood Avenue.
The St. Peter's College Glee Club, above, on stage, and left, on bus.

Caption for this school newspaper photo read: “Eager Petrean gets early start for Washington in an effort to be first on line for the Georgetown game.”
St. Peter’s College and St. Peter’s Prep were separately incorporated on February 10, 1955. Almost exactly a year later, February 22, 1956, the college broke ground for Dinneen Hall. Twelve hundred students attended St. Peter’s College that year, all of whom had to take twenty-four credits in philosophy and twelve in theology. Forty-seven percent of the 1956 graduates went to graduate school. Two live peacocks were on campus—Peter I (who later died and was stuffed) and Peter II (who removed himself with an unbearably screeching mating call). Dinneen Hall opened for classes in 1957. It was three times bigger than the Arts Building it replaced. In 1957 and 1958, the college’s varsity basketball squads made it to the National Invitational Tournament. Each time the students gave the team a motorcade on the Boulevard; each time the team lost its opening game at Madison Square Garden.

Tuition at St. Peter’s College in 1958 was $600. In spring of that year the American Chemistry Society recognized St. Peter’s as a competent training ground for chemists. And in May, Lawrence Farrell accepted the first Fulbright Scholarship ever awarded to one of the college’s business school students. On February 20, 1959, the college bought a garage on the corner of Montgomery Street and West Side Avenue; in September, the first floor was turned into a rifle range, the second floor into classrooms. Today the building is Rankin Hall. Lieutenant Colonel Robert Kantz, cadet commandant, commented at the time that the new facilities were “equal or better than those of any other ROTC unit in the east.” A full 839 of the college’s 1932 students were enrolled in the ROTC program. That autumn, Dr. George Yanitelli started an Honors Program. On December 29, 1958, ground was broken for St. Peter’s Hall, the present Jesuit residence on the Boulevard.

By the end of 1959, after a decade of alumni festivities honoring the 400th anniversary of the death of St. Ignatius, the St. Peter’s College student could take a course in operating the Supervisory Control Panel of a Remington Rand Univac Computer.
Amid the decibels of the largest crowd to witness a National Invitation Tournament game, St. Peter's College of Jersey City emerged last night as proud as Peacocks.

—New York Times

Fr. Yanitelli accepting St. Peter's College presidency in 1965.

Dick Gregory in 1969.

Fr. Yanitelli tries to reason with Prof. Thomas Haesler during 1969 strike.
It was the decade St. Peter’s key chain snapped: The Sixties. A manic ten years, from start to finish, the insane contradictions so exquisitely targeted, you wondered if some experimenting playwright deity was at work.

I mean, this was St. Peter’s College, a Jesuit college. Over half the enrollment in ROTC. Students nicknamed their campus buildings, for Peter’s sake. The seniors daily wore Academy black robes that would have embarrassed Rousseau in his heyday. The most portentous change of the decade, you could figure, might be a different brand of hamburger rolls in the cafe.

But not quite. On June 23, 1960, Rev. Edward Clark, S.J., became president of St. Peter’s College. Rev. Leo McLaughlin, S.J., and Rev. Victor Yani- telli, S.J., succeeded him in 1965. The Pauw Wow told us early in the decade not to take people like the Beatles or Muhammad Ali seriously. Moreover, in April, 1960, the paper said that that favorite non-object, school spirit, was spir-ituating itself all over the place. Then in May, same year, month later, it said that apathy was what was happening.

Yes, a very special decade was on its way. In November, 1962, Fr. McLaughlin, future president for four months (the average term of his predecessors had been five years), told a group of sophomores: “You’re all illiterate. But don’t let that bother you too much. When you get out of St. Peter’s, you’ll be in competition with even worse illiterates from other colleges.” The senior robes had all but disappeared by that year.

In 1965, students held a mass political rally—in support of President Johnson, Martin Luther King came to the college and the lay teachers joined The American Association of University Professors. A year later, St. Peter’s admitted women. Some of the residing students had buttons made up which said THIS IS A MAN’S SCHOOL. Also in ’66, the two-term semester went three-term trimester. The first coffeehouse and a new library rose in 1967.

The varsity basketball team made it into the National Invitational Tournament (NIT) at Madison Square Garden three times in a row, starting in 1967. It had previously been in the NIT twice. In October, 1968, Richard Nixon visited St. Peter’s College. Students held the first ever St. Peter’s peace demonstration in November. The dress code was dropped.

The decade’s last year hosted the opening of an Inner City Center, students calling two strikes, the first broadcast of WSPC campus radio, the bludgeoning out of the word “compulsory” from in front of ROTC in the school catalogue, and fraternities competing in a beer-drinking contest.

And St. Peter? Oh, he fixed his key chain by the end of ’69, and went home to take a nice warm shower. Although when he finished his shower, he saw that he had forgotten to put towels in the bathroom, and stood there for just a second a little stunned, a little annoyed and a little chilly.

But nevertheless cleaner and smarter, and more prepared to take on the 70s.

Two sides of St. Peter’s College—left, in the cafeteria; right, in the gym—1960s vintage.
St. Peter's College coffeehouse, the Swan Song.

Dinneen Hall, 1962.

Montgomery Street, 1962.
Some of 1966's coeds, with Miss Josefine Castan, Spanish language and literature professor and the college's first Dean of Women, superimposed up front.
In September, '69, ROTC at St. Peter's became voluntary for the first time since it had started in 1951—an ironic bit of timing since most of the college's freshmen in 1969 were born in 1951. Also that fall, St. Peter's went back to the semester system after three years of trimester. "The wounds began to heal," said former student Ray Martignoni, "although we were jittery, fearing that at any moment the other shoe would drop and the battle would resume."

Pope Hall opened for classes in early 1970. An Afro-American Studies Program started at St. Peter's College in 1970 with Abukuse Mbirika its chairman. A Black Collegiate Cultural Society had established itself on campus in 1969. Dr. Lawrence Maligù, chairman of St. Peter's Counseling Center since 1949, had this to say about the student of the 70s: "The student of the past talked about justice and social equality. Today, kids are acting out what we talked about. Of course, there's been a lot of over-reaction because they're moving in areas where guides don't exist. Their basic values haven't changed from the old students, but their approaches and adaptation have."

A signpost of the college's direction in the 70s was the formation of a "Life Center" on Pavonia and Summit Avenues, Jersey City, across the street from a jail, in the spring of 1970. Rev. Robert Castle, S.J., and some St. Peter's students got permission from the Episcopal Diocese of Newark to use an abandoned church building for service to the community. Yes, the Life Center was a signpost straight off nothing less urbanized than a city telephone pole, for it signaled concentrated and steady urban involvement for St. Peter's College.

Its Urban Studies Department today is one of the best in the nation, handling the financial and business ends of fourteen of the government's anti-poverty programs. Furthermore, the number of the college's own anti-poverty programs equals that of some major cities. Another program, the Inner City Business Project, helps city residents start their own businesses.

The college president, Rev. Victor Yanitelli, S.J., has this to say about his role as an urban activist: "I think it's my direction. Certainly it's my passion. I really feel that socially and within the context of the educational mission, this college has got to become part of this town. We must become a part of this change. We must give new direction to the liberal arts so they have meaning in the urban context and a technological society. We must find a way to give honest academic credit for education work done in urban centers so that human experience can also become a part of the curriculum."

Today, 1972, St. Peter's College has 2500 day students and 2100 night students. Most of them are from Hudson County and hop buses, trains and cars to school each day. One out of every three students is a woman. The Evening Division students have their own government, activities and dean.

It has taken about $15 million to build the current college plant, and a little over half of that was spent on buildings or land-purchases over the past eight years. According to one survey of the American Medical Association, St. Peter's College is among the top twenty-five training grounds in the country. This year, five laymen were appointed to the board of trustees for the first time.

Each student of course, only gets one full trip through this Jesuit College in Jersey City, St. Peter's College, only one visit to the Edward F. Young Estate. So here we arrive not at the end of a history, but at that most attractive and unfortunate of truths—we're only young once.

And when you get right down to it, a young person is what St. Peter's College is all about.

Text adapted from The Young Estate, a book on the history of St. Peter's College by Jim O'Donnell. Copyright © 1972 by St. Peter's College and Jim O'Donnell. All rights reserved.
Well, I try my best
To be just like I am
But everybody wants you
To be just like them
They say sing while youslave
And I just get bored

—Bob Dylan
Saint Peter's Accepts NIT Invitation

THE JERSEY JOURNAL

ST. PETER'S GETS NIT BERTH

New York Post Sports

Fordham Set to Join St. Peter's & Co. in NIT
WELL, alright—so I guess about half the people who have eaten three or more meals in the St. Peter's College student cafeteria aren't very fond of the place. Music too loud; food a little on the toxic side; perpetual card games the antithesis of what they think college is supposed to be all about; climate always a couple of degrees above muggy. The other half of course—the ones with their nicotine fingers on the volume-control knobs, into the Special-of-the-Day Finnish salad dressing, abound a bluffed-out hand of playing cards (you know, the ones who never notice the temperature)—dig their five-day-a-week cafeteria routine right up to its high stereophonic stoniness and right down to its last cigarette butt.
Jesuit College in Jersey City financed by the Peacock Pie and the Centennial Office.

Designed, captioned and narrated by Jim O'Donnell.

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The Cover: Two views of Kennedy Boulevard—the present site of St. Peter’s College. The corner at the left of the top photo is Glenwood Avenue in 1919; the two quaint cars are moving toward the camera from Journal Square. Bottom photo: McDermott Hall, St. Peter’s College classroom building, on the corner of the Boulevard and Glenwood in 1957. The dazzling lights reflect the dizzying pace that, fifteen years ago as now, embraces city habitation.

Most photos and drawings are from St. Peter’s College yearbooks, school newspapers and alumni bulletins.

St. Peter’s College is located on 2641 Kennedy Boulevard, Jersey City, New Jersey.