

VALLEY & STATE

Late 1860s: St. Joseph College makes progress

It was reported in March 1868 that some 80 students were in attendance at St. Joseph College, as it was known at that time. A fundraising event known as the "Ladies Fair and Gift Distribution" was held in April 1868 for the benefit of the college. The event, held at the Dalzell Building, described as "a new, magnificent structure" at the corner of Elizabeth and 13th Streets, took place over four days from April 27 to April 30. The rooms in the building were described and "expensively and gorgeously decorated," with many items displayed for sale.

The first two days brought windy weather, and Elizabeth Street, which was not paved, became quite dusty. The front and side doors of the building remained closed, to keep dust from circulating throughout the building. Those attending the event entered through the rear door.

The hours varied each evening to attract more attendance, including supporters from Matamoros.

On one evening, the Matamoros Band provided musical entertainment. Another evening featured a lecture by a rising young lawyer, Nestor Scanlan. On another evening, prizes and gifts were distributed.

Members of these well-known families participated: Putegnat, Tijerina, Browne, Vivier, Kenedy, King, Dalzell, Yturria, Ford, Kleiber, Cummings, Combe, Hicks and Powers.

The event was described as a great success, "far in advance of anything ever gotten up in this region of the country, and reflected a great deal of credit upon all persons aiding the charitable undertaking."

The ladies who organized the event were pleased to announce that \$6,648 had been raised for the school. (That amount would be equivalent to about \$115,000, based on 2014 prices).

In January 1869, five fathers of the Christian Schools Catholic order assumed responsibility for direction of St. Joseph College. They came to Brownsville from New York and Canada, under the direction of Brother Noah.

Following their arrival, they issued a document describing their plans: "Having long felt the necessity of a first class commercial, scientific and literary institution in this section of the country, and having been repeatedly requested and urged by the Reverend Clergy and the most influential citizens to operate an establishment in this city, the Christian Brothers have consented to take charge of St. Joseph's College, which they will endeavor to conduct in a manner as to merit the confidence and patronage of impartial and discriminating public.

"While all that usually enters into a collegiate course will receive due attention, particular care will be bestowed on the more essential branches.

"The system of government is mild and parental and yet firm in enforcing the establishment of discipline. Students of all denominations are received and their religious opinions are unrestricted.

"The number of boarders being limited, the propriety of an early application is suggested.

"To render the recreation hours more agreeable, a brass band and orchestra will rehearse every evening under the direction of an experienced musician.

“Students from a distance must have some responsible party in the city, who will be accountable for bills, etc.”

The document went on to describe charges that would be assessed:

- Payment for terms of 2 ½ months, in advance, in specie: \$50.
- Entrance fee, paid only once: 10.
- Vacation at college: 50.
- Extra charges: music, piano, \$12; violin \$10; wind instrument, \$10; drawing, \$12.
- Books will be furnished at correct prices.
- The pocket money of the student is to be deposited with the treasurer.
- No refunds will be made when student is to be removed before the end of the term, except due to serious illness. Day scholars:
 - Collegiate department, per month: \$5.
 - Intermediate department, per month: \$4.
 - Preparatory department, per month: \$3.
- Besides the apparel necessary for neatness and comfort, each student should be furnished with the following: one feather pillow, four pillow slips, one spread, two blankets, two pairs of shoes, two pairs of drawers.
- Also, a sufficient number of shirts, socks, handkerchiefs, towels, combs, brushes, etc.
- These will be furnished by the college, provided a sufficient sum is deposited with the treasurer for this purpose.

This story will be continued next week.

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Special to the Herald

