

The history of St. Henry's in a deluxe edition of 400 photographs

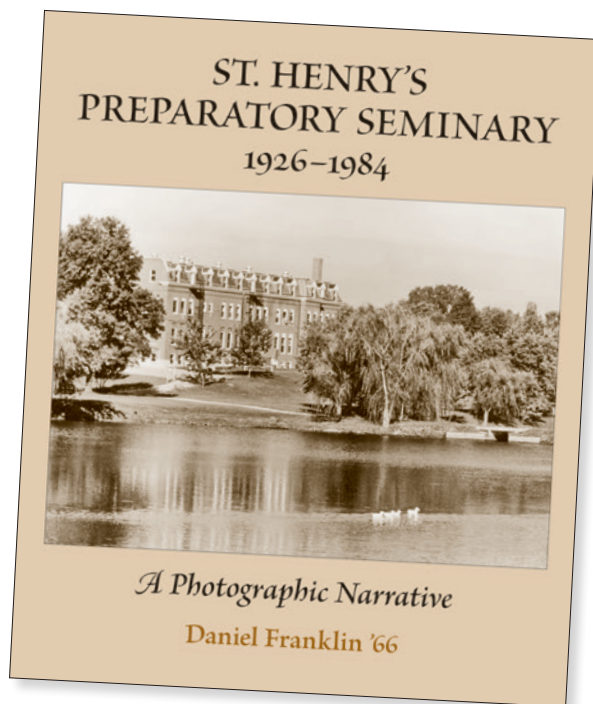
One photograph records a moment in time. Four hundred photographs tell a story. Individually, they are freeze frames of institutional life, of students' transitions from adolescence to manhood. Collectively, they chronicle the crucible that was St. Henry's Preparatory Seminary: its spirit, its culture and traditions, its *truths*.

Author Daniel Franklin, class of '66, divides the seminary's history into four eras: Pioneers (1926–1940), Builders (1940–1955), Boomers (1955–1965), and Prepsters (1965–1984). Major themes are religious life, academics, manual labor/workdays, recreation, sports, and plays and programs.



“In these pages, I celebrate St. Henry's and its sons: the real and imagined hardships we suffered shoulder to shoulder, the goals we accomplished side by side, the brotherhood we shared and cherish.”

—*from the Preface*



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ST. HENRY'S
PREPARATORY
SEMINARY

1926-1984



A Photographic Narrative

Daniel Franklin

Class of '66

VILLAGE
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Pioneers

1926–1940

On August 31, 1923, two Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate traveled from St. Louis to Belleville by streetcar. Fr. Joseph Pothmann later recounted that he and Fr. Max Kassiepe told Bishop Henry Althoff, “We’re looking for a place to establish our order,” to which the bishop replied, “I’m looking for just such priests.” The bishop drove his visitors to a wooded 54-acre site with buildings, four miles west of the city square. There and then, he offered them the property known as Priester’s Park.

There may have been prophecy in the name, but enormous tasks lay ahead. The Oblates would need to renovate and furnish the mission house (the original Priester’s Hotel); organize and preach missions and retreats; minister to St. Henry’s parish; and establish a “seminary college for boys,” serving both the Oblates and the diocese.

The small band of Oblates set to work. They attained status as a vice-province on December 8, 1924, and Fr. Pothmann was appointed provincial. Bishop Althoff dedicated the mission house in May 1925, and a substantial addition—“the college building”—was undertaken early the following year.

When St. Henry’s first 14 students arrived in October 1926, the brickwork on the addition hadn’t reached the second floor and the new furnace hadn’t been installed. In fact, not all of the faculty members had arrived; substitutes taught the first two weeks of classes. The college addition was finally ready for occupation in January 1927.

The student body doubled by the second scholastic year, and St. Henry’s College soon acquired the appurtenances of a bona fide school: By 1930, it possessed a literary society, a brass band, an extramural baseball team, and a student newspaper.

Through the ensuing decade of the Great Depression, the Oblates—with faith in themselves and their mission, crucially supplemented by ingenuity and good fortune—were able to establish a seminary that would be a home, bookish and spirited and full of purpose, for more than 2,800 young men over six decades.



Representing St. Henry's on the diamond in the 1930s were John Grote, William Coovert, and Michael Podrasky.

A gifted athlete himself, Fr. Goetz served as director of athletics during most of the 1920s and 1930s. Below, he poses with the varsity baseball team in 1934.





Between 1926 and 1935, stained glass windows were installed on either side of the altar in the A Building chapel (above).

During Summer 1935, the chapel was completely renovated; only the pews were retained (below). The chapel was enlarged, the stained glass windows were transferred to the chapel proper, side altars were set in alcoves behind statue partitions, the communion rail was removed, and the walls and ceiling were adorned with elaborate faux frescoing. A year later, an all-electric Wicks pipe organ was installed.





College men engage in earnest discussion in their study hall in St. Mary's Hall, January 1945.

Freshmen apply themselves in their study hall on the second floor of the A Building, Autumn 1944.



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Throughout Spring 1952, finishing touches were made to the chapel. The grill of the priests' oratory was installed, and the mosaic of the shrine altar was cemented in place. A new painting of Our Lady of the Snows adorned the side chapel.

Students attend a Lenten mass in the chapel in the early 1950s.





Small campus projects could be accomplished as part of routine manual labor, but large projects required several uninterrupted hours of work by large numbers of students—often, an entire class.

Here, a gang of students prepare to fell a tree on one of numerous workdays in the 1940s and 1950s.



Students dig a trench between the gymnasium and refectory in preparation for a new sewer line.

Although a winch truck purchased in the 1960s provided mechanical advantage in uprooting trees, most construction work on campus was performed with hand tools.



Indoor hobbies often centered on crafts in the late 1950s. Ed Barbier takes advantage of the new hobby shop in the basement of Mazenod Hall to assemble a rosary (at left, above). Other students created wallets, missal cases, and other articles from leather (at left) or used tools in the electronics shop in the basement of the A Building to build models and assemble kits (below).

Hobbies sometimes meshed with manual labor jobs and staff roles on the *Gleeman*. In the mid-1950s, Jack Frerker, Larry Garner, and Roger Karban produced outstanding photography for the student publication. Above, Roger poses at an enlarger in the basement darkroom in Mazenod Hall.





In addition to pickup hockey games when the lakes froze, enthusiasts had occasional matches against Althoff High School teams. Sometimes, the Belleville fire department sprayed water from the big lake onto the small one to provide a smoother skating surface.

Above, Alan Ruby stops a shot by Dave Fons, while Bob Weaver skates in for the rebound.

Floor hockey in the gym flourished from 1972 into the 1980s. At first, matches were played with homemade nets and wooden sticks covered with socks; within a year, the school provided heavy-duty goals and rugged plastic sticks.

In an early-1982 intramural floor hockey match (below), Don Massey, Allen Hewardine, Bill Peters, and John Ross crowd the goal as Bill fans on the puck.



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By the mid-1960s, folk music pervaded the rec halls and music rooms, as well as liturgical events, talent shows, and other campus programs. On February 5, 1967, students presented a "folk fest," a variety show for parents and friends of students; the program consisted mainly of songs accompanied by guitar. The folk fest became an annual event, lasting until the mid-1970s.

Above, sophomores Tim Gilbreth and George Hasenstab sing a Simon and Garfunkel tune at the February 2, 1969 Prep to Our Folks show.

Rock bands were popular, too. Below, Larry Loyet, Steve Westlund, Mike Murphy, and Bill Belobraydic play, while Jim Benzoni, Mike Laws, and Rich Royster look on.





The 1977 school play, *Billy Budd*, was presented on April 2 and 3. It was directed by Frs. Allen Maes and Tom Meyer, who expanded the cast from 24 to 29 parts so that all tryouts would get a role. More than half the students were involved in the production, which featured one of the most elaborate sets in St. Henry's history. The morality play based on Herman Melville's novel sets an innocent crewman against an evil officer, and then against the intransigence of British maritime law.



Fr. Allen Maes produced and directed several exotic plays in the late 1970s, among them the musicals *Philemon* (the 1976 school play) and *Pacific Overtures* (the 1979 school play). He also directed *Rashomon*, presented at senior entertainment night on November 20, 1977 (at left). The play revolves around four conflicting accounts of a samurai's murder.

Below, Ben Fieser sews a costume for *Philemon*.



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