

# AFTER EIGHTY YEARS...

**S**T. FRANCIS College history was begun by those Brothers who first arrived on these shores and pioneered in the latter half of the nineteenth century for the charitable work of educating Brooklyn's growing population. In due time their teaching expanded so far that it was decided to build on Baltic Street an Academy which was shortly destined to be the home of the College.

In 1858 the population of the newly established diocese of Brooklyn was being augmented with the arrival of every ship from Europe. Franciscans were needed to supply the education of the children of immigrants. Consequently Bishop Loughlin appealed for teaching Brothers to Archbishop McHale of Tuam, Ireland. The plea fell on sympathetic ears; and on May 31st, 1858, two Brothers, John McMahon and Vincent Hayes, arrived in Brooklyn to begin the foundation of the present Congregation.

After many hardships and disappointments, the Brothers acquired an old house on Butler Street, to the rear of the Baltic property which they had recently procured. The result was that many new students could be accommodated, and many more aspirants to the Order accepted. The Order increased rapidly, and the insistent demand for Franciscan teachers in parish schools grew apace. In 1868, when the order was incorporated under the title "Saint Francis Monastery of the City of Brooklyn," the Brothers had already established no less than seven parish schools, a wonderful record for ten years. Today one may see these Brothers, who receive as recompense only the satisfaction of serving God, leaving their monastery on Butler Street every school day to travel to the parish schools scattered throughout the borough.

In 1870 the property was acquired toward the Smith Street side of the school on Baltic Street, and on it was built a wing at right angles to the original building. This wing contained a chapel, dormitories, classrooms, and a gymnasium. After school every afternoon during its construction, the Brothers assisted the contractors engaged upon the work. In 1884, when the legislature of the State of New York enlarged the powers of the corporation, by which enlargement the "trustees of Saint Francis College are empowered to confer such literary honors and degrees as are granted by the other colleges and universities of this state," part of the new wing was used for higher education. Shortly after the building of the new wing, property on the Court Street side of the original Baltic Street building was acquired. Today it is a garden sanctuary in the heart of the city. As one rests on the veranda in the rear of the monastery, the grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, which stands in the center of this garden, gives one the feeling of having been transported to the Old World.

The thing to be borne in mind in the early history of the Order — and the days can be counted to the bottom of the barrel even in our own time — is the fact that the extensive educational work was carried on without much financial backing. It is quite true that the needs of the Brothers are few and simple, but the inauguration and maintenance of a huge educational program is an extensive undertaking, as the taxpayers of such large cities as New York and Chicago well know.

There are many men of prominence today who recall with deep love and affection the saintly men who taught them at St. Francis. They are all in concurrence on the high quality of the education they received and on the noble characters of the Franciscan teachers who sent them forth into the world with high ideals and the will to succeed.