

# The Heritage of Saint Francis College

*The little man of Assisi — that's where it all really began some eight hundred years ago. They say he talked to the animals. Maybe, but this legend points up what was perhaps the most characteristic trait of St. Francis — he loved life. Not only did he love his fellowman, but he loved everything in this world of ours.*

*The story of the Franciscans in the Diocese of Brooklyn began when the Right Reverend John Laughlin, the first Bishop of Brooklyn, decided to establish a school system for his diocese. The bishop requested aid from the Irish Congregation of the Franciscan Brothers. On May 31, 1858, two Franciscan Brothers, John McMahon and Vincent Hayes, arrived from Galway to begin St. Francis Academy, the first private secondary school in the Diocese of Brooklyn. This was the beginning of what would someday become St. Francis College. The first home of this institution would be a building on Baltic Street converted into a school by the brothers and a layman, Martin St. Ledger.*

*In 1868 the Brooklyn Congregation of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis received legal status under the name "The St. Francis Monastery of the City of Brooklyn."*

*By the year 1884 the St. Francis Monastery had grown considerably, so much so that the New York State Legislature empowered the trustees to establish a literary college in the City of Brooklyn under the name of Saint Francis College, with the power to confer diplomas, honors, and degrees. This was done on May 8, of that year; this day is now known as "Charter Day" and is celebrated annually by the College. The first Bachelor of Arts Degree was conferred in June 1885; seven years later the first Bachelor of Science Degree was granted.*

*Saint Francis College is chartered by the Legislature of the State of New York. The college is accredited by the Regents of the University of the State of New York and by the Middle State Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. The college is a member of the National Catholic Education Association, the Association of the Colleges and Universities of the State of New York, the Association of American Colleges, the Franciscan Education Conference, the Commission on Christian Higher Education, and the National Commission on Accrediting. It is affiliated with the Catholic University of America. There is a chapter of the American Association of University Professors on campus.*

*Change and growth have been an integral part of St. Francis ever since its beginnings. In 1926, after a drive for the erection of a new building to provide space for the large influx of students, the Butler Street building was opened. In 1939, the College erected a four story structure known as Jerome Hall, which was used for student services. In 1952 the building formerly used by St. Francis Preparatory School was converted into a student activity building called Terrier Hall (it was removed in 1957).*

*In 1960 the big change for our College began: the College purchased five office buildings from Brooklyn Union Gas Company that spring. These buildings on Remsen Street, between Court and Clinton Streets through to Joralemon Street in the heart of the Brooklyn Civic Center was the first step in the college's expansion program. This enabled the College to double its enrollment. The main building (the art building) on Remsen Street was opened in September of 1962. The eight-story brick and steel structure houses the Administrative offices, the student lounge, the chapel, and the guidance center (Career Planning). Adjacent to the main buildings is the McGarry Library which has more than 100,000 volumes.*

*In 1968 the College underwent its biggest transition ever with the construction of the Science Building which offered expanded opportunity for laboratory work in the physical sciences and the Student/Faculty Building (Faculty Residence) which houses additional lounge and office spaces. In 1972 the gymnasium was completed, which is housed in the Physical Education Building; this building houses the gym, offices, and Olympic size pool, a sauna, large seating capacity, and other facilities.*

*Then, St. Francis College made another vast change in this era; the formerly all-male College went co-educational in 1969 and therein opened its doors to women. A burgeoning new era was beginning for our College. Recently, in 1983 the Student/Faculty Lounge on the Mezzanine was dedicated.*

*St. Francis College has in the past educated many priests of the Diocese of Brooklyn and Rockville Center. We have contributed to the life of the community, giving it many distinguished public servants, scientists, men of letters, lawyers, and businessmen. It has especially contributed to the academic community, having trained many teachers.*

*The quality of education at Saint Francis College is evident in the caliber of its graduates. Although St. Francis has grown considerably since its humble beginnings, it still retains the "Franciscan Spirit" which has always made our College unique and has more importantly made it our College.*



*College Building on Butler Street 1926*

## **The Beginning**