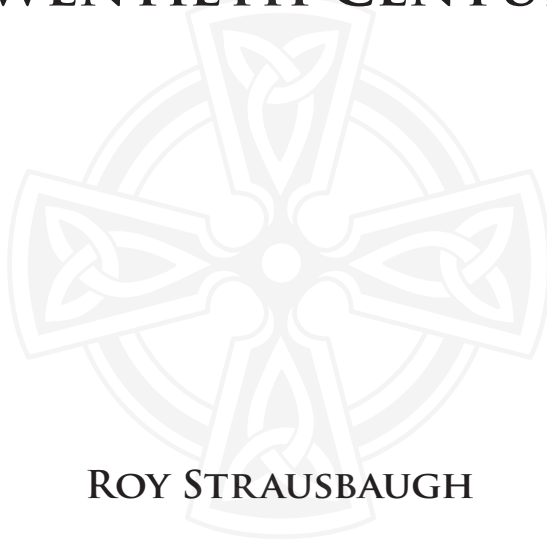


THE FOUNDATIONS  
OF A UNIVERSITY:  
MERCYHURST IN THE  
TWENTIETH CENTURY



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*Dedicated to the Sisters of Mercy  
who founded, brought to life  
and guided Mercyhurst College*

## INTRODUCTION

The author first came to Mercyhurst in 1994. My goal was to teach history and advise adult students for a few years and, then, retire for a second time. Now, in 2012, eighteen years have passed; it has been another career. During that time, I was welcomed to Mercyhurst, and I became a part of this community of learning. The muses, at least Clio, had another calling for me. In the fall of 2007, I suggested to President Thomas Gamble that, since the college did not have a comprehensive history, I would be willing to set my hand to the task. He said yes. I appreciate his support of me at every step of this enterprise.

No story of Mercyhurst can be told without understanding the contributions of the Sisters of Mercy, their labor, love, and passion for this college. Many have written of the contributions of the Sisters of Mercy. Most of them, like Mother Borgia Egan and Mother Eustace Taylor, were a part of the college's history themselves.

In all cases, I have made every attempt to go back as far as one could to original sources, be they files concerning the Pioneers or the papers of Sister Carolyn Hermann, president of the college from 1962 to 1972. Documents such as self-studies for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education as well as the commission's observations and review of the college were critical. The *Merviad* was an important source for much that went on at the college. The minutes of the Board of Trustees were essential. Larie Pintea's role as oral historian contributed much. However, interviews long after the fact, be they on tape or in person are many times less than accurate, especially in identifying precise dates and the specifics elements of a topic.

The story of the college spans a time of great change in American higher education. Mercyhurst's experience illustrates this. At times, I have focused on an issue more than might be expected in a history of the college. Whether it is Michael Relihan's accomplishments in enhancing teacher education for parochial schools, or whether it is the faculty's efforts to establish collective bargaining, such elements place in context the forces that affected the school's destiny.

It is a detailed history, and the overwhelming majority of sources were primary sources—materials in the university's Sister Mary Lawrence Franklin Archives and the Motherhouse archives. In the archives of the university, Earleen Glaser was always ready to assist me in finding materials and photographs, successfully. I am grateful.

Also, I am indebted to Sister Edith Langiotti, Archivist, at the Motherhouse. Sister Edith's support and readiness to explore files for me was exceptional. Her invitation to lunch was always a welcome break when I was working at the Motherhouse. Among all the other documents and records at the Motherhouse, the draft manuscripts of a history or partial history of the college that I found there were invaluable. In particular, the Pioneer Sisters who founded the college recorded in some fashion their memories of what happened. The papers of Sister Mary Charles Weschler, among others, were especially valuable.

There were many who read chapters of the book. In particular, Pat Liebel's '53 reading and commenting on the book was invaluable, especially for her correction of the spelling of surnames, and providing important context. She has a great wealth of knowledge about the alumni of the school. Sister Domenica DeLeo '59 also read and commented suggesting more appropriate references to the Sisters of Mercy. Also, great appreciation goes to Susan Hurley Corbran '73, Carolyn Carlins '12 and Courtney Sullivan '12 (graduate school) for detailed reading and commenting. Special thanks go to Kelly Craig for her design and layout of the book and to Michael Sullivan from Dispatch Digital. Of course, the inevitable errors in this work are mine.

While a European historian by training, I began writing about American higher education in the twentieth century during my last years at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. There, I completed a history of that school from 1966–1990. This effort provided me increased insight into the higher education experience in northwestern Pennsylvania, and provided me with a foundation to undertake the history of Mercyhurst.

I anticipated that I would have finished sooner, alas, caring for my mother, Emma Irene Strausbaugh, until she died at age 99, as well as an unanticipated role as chair of the board of trustees for several years at Thiel College, delayed my work. However, the latter issue was one that, in the end, allowed me to understand, better, the issues related to both troubles and success at small liberal arts, church related colleges.

During the enterprise, Rosanna, my wife, endured my time with the door to my study at home closed, as well as my many hours in Preston Hall and Hammermill Library. She has had great patience.

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