

June 2023

Sources on the History of Jesuit Higher Education: A Bibliographic Essay

Michael Rizzi
michael.rizzi27@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://epublications.regis.edu/jhe>



Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rizzi, Michael (2023) "Sources on the History of Jesuit Higher Education: A Bibliographic Essay," *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal*: Vol. 12: No. 1, Article 11.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53309/2164-7666.1423>

Available at: <https://epublications.regis.edu/jhe/vol12/iss1/11>

This Resource is brought to you for free and open access by the Scholarly and Peer-Reviewed Journals at ePublications at Regis University. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal* by an authorized administrator of ePublications at Regis University. For more information, please contact epublications@regis.edu.

Sources on the History of Jesuit Higher Education: A Bibliographic Essay

Michael T. Rizzi
University of Pittsburgh
rizzim@pitt.edu

Abstract

This essay provides an annotated bibliography, highlighting books and articles about the history of Jesuit higher education in the United States. It lists sources that should be helpful to anyone researching the topic, and can be used as a starting point for scholars seeking more information about how Jesuit colleges and universities evolved over time.

In 2022, after seven years of research, it was my honor to publish the first book-length history of Jesuit higher education in the United States.¹ Collecting information on this topic was no easy task; by some measures, the Jesuits have operated as many as 54 US colleges and universities, about half of which either closed or discontinued their degree programs and evolved into high schools. Surveying the interconnected histories of so many institutions would have been impossible if not for a long list of excellent sources that had already told pieces of Jesuit history in more specialized or localized contexts.

The purpose of this essay is to provide an annotated bibliography on the history of US Jesuit colleges and universities. By identifying the sources that I found most useful in my own research, my hope is that this article can guide future scholars as they dig deeper into this story and move closer to a fuller understanding of American Jesuit history. The scholarly literature is full of insightful studies of individual Jesuit colleges, the Jesuits' educational philosophy, and specific elements of the Jesuit experience, but it can sometimes be difficult to see clearly how these many stories fit together into an overall narrative.

The story of Jesuit higher education is simultaneously local, national, and global. Many books and articles focus on only on the local aspects of this history (explaining how a particular Jesuit college met the needs of its community) or on the global aspects (explaining how the Jesuit order, as a whole, spread its educational mission around the world). It is only by reading all of these stories in context with each other, viewing them as

pieces of a complicated puzzle, that we can understand the many forces that shaped Jesuit higher education throughout history.

Regional Histories

There are several sources that survey the history of American Jesuits on a regional level. First is Father Gilbert Garraghan's three-volume *Jesuits of the Middle United States*, originally published in 1938 and republished by Loyola University Press in 1983. It tells the detailed story of the (mainly Belgian) Jesuits who settled in the Midwest, and who branched out from their first college, Saint Louis University, to staff others from Ohio to Kansas. Much of the narrative focuses on Jesuit missionary work among the Indigenous people of the Great Plains and the 1930s-era description of that activity is noticeably dated. However, Garraghan offers valuable accounts of the origins of Saint Louis and its daughter institutions—Creighton, Marquette, Xavier, and the University of Detroit Mercy—along with several less-successful college projects. Less detailed but still valuable are Garraghan's historical sketches of several colleges that the Missouri Jesuits inherited from other Jesuit provinces, including Regis and John Carroll Universities.²

A more recent book, *Sacrifice and Survival* by R. Eric Platt, offers the best-available history of Jesuit education in the South. Platt outlines the rise and fall of often-forgotten Jesuit institutions like St. Charles College in Louisiana, Sacred Heart College in Georgia, and St. Mary's University in Texas, demonstrating how the Jesuits closed those schools to ensure the survival of Loyola

University (New Orleans) and Spring Hill College.³

Gerald McKeivitt, S.J. is the authority on Jesuit activity in the American West. His 2007 book, *Brokers of Culture*, stands out among his many publications on that topic, outlining the missionary activity of the Italian Jesuits who settled in the Rocky Mountains and the California coast. As is the case in Garraghan's book, the focus here is mainly on the missions, with scattered, but insightful references to higher education.⁴ McKeivitt also wrote an article on the topic (essentially a shorter version of the book) that offers helpful details on the origins of Gonzaga University.⁵ More directly relevant is McKeivitt's 1979 book on the history of Santa Clara University, which, despite its titular focus, also includes valuable historical sketches of the University of San Francisco and Loyola Marymount University.⁶

There is not, to my knowledge, a comparably comprehensive history of the East Coast Jesuits. This is likely because Jesuit activity in the East has been fragmented, with Fordham and most of New York City historically under the influence of French Jesuits and the rest of the region under separate provinces based in Maryland or Boston—all of which merged, split, and merged again at various points. However, Arthur Bender, S.J. provides a detailed history of Jesuits in New York State⁷ and James Leo Burke, S.J. studies the former New England Province in two pamphlets now accessible digitally through the College of the Holy Cross.⁸

Broad National Histories

Few scholarly publications have attempted a “big-picture” account of Jesuit higher education writ large, but Gerald McKeivitt, S.J. provides a brief overview of the topic in a 1983 article.⁹ Philip Gleason tackles the subject as well in a 2007 article, but limits the scope of his analysis to the 1800s. Gleason also omits a handful of Jesuit colleges and universities that existed during this timeframe.¹⁰

Father William McGucken's 1932 book, *The Jesuits and Education*, perhaps comes closest to a truly national analysis, but its focus is explicitly on

Jesuit high schools. Given that most Jesuit colleges originated as something akin to what we would call a high school, this classic book still has some relevance to Jesuit higher education.¹¹

There are general histories of Catholic higher education overall and most of these sources naturally include references to Jesuit schools. Edward Power's classic *Catholic Higher Education in America* provides a good overview, but because it was published in 1972, it omits the pivotal developments that have taken place since then, including the separate incorporation of the colleges and the modern efforts to redefine Catholic education.¹² Today's readers can pick up the story where Power's book left off by consulting more recent works, like Philip Gleason's *Contending with Modernity* and Father William Leahy's *Adapting to America*, both of which cover the same ground as Power but extend the narrative by a few decades.¹³ Other sources, like Schier and Russett's *Catholic Women's Colleges in America* (2001) and a handful of journal articles, provide good general analysis of Catholic higher education.¹⁴ George Marsden's *The Soul of the American University* primarily analyzes Protestant higher education, but includes references to Catholic schools.¹⁵

There are also what might be called “thematic” histories, which tell a sweeping national story from a limited perspective. Both Gleason's and Leahy's aforementioned books focus on how Catholic colleges were forced to adapt and evolve their traditional approach to education in order to survive in the American system. Paul Fitzgerald, S.J. offers a detailed look at the governance model for Jesuit colleges and how it changed in the twentieth century, while Kathleen Mahoney describes the tensions between Jesuit colleges and Harvard Law School during a pivotal controversy that played out in the late 1800s.¹⁶ One of the best collections of primary documents related to Catholic higher education is *American Catholic Higher Education: Essential Documents, 1967-1990*, edited by Alice Gallin, O.S.U.¹⁷

Individual College Histories

The most abundant sources of information about the history of Jesuit higher education are what Philip Gleason termed “institutional

biographies”¹⁸—books or articles that trace the history of an individual school.

Many books written about Jesuit colleges were commissioned by the colleges themselves, often to mark a centennial or other major anniversary. Because they were often intended to be read by students and alumni of the college, they tend to be infused with a flair of school spirit and nostalgia. This tends to be particularly true of college histories written in the 1950s or earlier. For example, the early histories of Georgetown and Saint Louis Universities barely mention slavery, even though enslaved people were an important part of the histories of both the Maryland and the Missouri Jesuits.

Georgetown, Fordham, and to some extent, Saint Louis are the most-studied of the Jesuit colleges. Classic books on Georgetown’s history include John Gilmary Shea’s 1891 centennial study, as well as Father John Daley’s 1957 *Georgetown University: Origin and Early Years* and Father Joseph Durkin’s 1963 sequel, *Georgetown University: The Middle Years*.¹⁹ Durkin also wrote a popular Georgetown history for a wider audience that was published by Doubleday in 1964.²⁰ All of these sources have been superseded by Robert Emmett Curran’s three-volume 2010 history, which takes a more comprehensive approach.²¹ Other useful scholarship can be found in Father William McFadden’s bicentennial collection of reflections on Georgetown’s mission and identity.²² A new translation of the memoirs of Father Giovanni Grassi, an Italian missionary who served as Georgetown’s president during the War of 1812, is a valuable primary source.²³

Fordham’s history was recently retold in Father Thomas Shelley’s excellent 2016 book, which draws from previous sources including Christa Klein’s 1976 doctoral thesis and Father Robert Gannon’s 1967 institutional biography.²⁴ For many years, William Barnaby Faherty, S.J. was the authority on Saint Louis University history, with several articles on the subject along with two books: one lengthy 1968 volume and a much shorter 2009 paperback.²⁵ A new history of Saint Louis University, published in 2017, updates the narrative.²⁶

Standouts among other institutional biographies include Nicholas Varga’s study of Loyola University Maryland, which provides a truly comprehensive account of the issues facing smaller Catholic colleges and offers valuable insights into several mid-twentieth century court cases that affected both Loyola and Catholic education writ large.²⁷ Father Anthony Kuzniewski’s book on Holy Cross and David Contosta’s book on Saint Joseph’s (Philadelphia) are equally valuable in telling the story of East Coast Jesuits outside of Georgetown.²⁸ Boston College’s history was told in 1947 by Father David Dunigan; in 1990 by Donovan, Dunigan, and Fitzgerald; and most recently by James O’Toole in *Ever to Excel* (2022).²⁹

Western and Southern Jesuit schools have received comparatively less scholarly attention, but good institutional biographies exist in the form of McKeivitt’s history of Santa Clara, Father Harold Stansell’s 1977 history of Regis (and Ron Brockway’s 2003 follow-up volume), Walt Crowley’s standout history of Seattle University, Father Wilfred Schoenberg’s 1960s-era history of Gonzaga, and Kevin Starr’s book commemorating Loyola Marymount’s centennial.³⁰ The University of San Francisco’s story is told in context with other Jesuit activities in the city in Father John Bernard McGloin’s *Jesuits by the Golden Gate*.³¹ In Louisiana, Bernard Cook contributed significantly to our understanding of Loyola University New Orleans.³² In Alabama, Spring Hill College archivist Charles J. Boyle wrote and edited a handful of historical sketches of that institution.³³

Among Midwestern schools, standout publications include Thomas Jablonsky’s biography of Marquette, Shirl Kasper’s centennial history of Rockhurst, Dennis Mihelich’s lengthy history of Creighton, Donald Gavin’s centennial history of John Carroll, and Ellen Skerrett’s history of Loyola Chicago.³⁴ As the second-oldest Jesuit school in the Midwest, Xavier University played an outsized role in the region’s history—a story told well in Father Lee Bennish’s 1981 book.³⁵ Herman Muller, S.J. authored a history of the University of Detroit in 1977; more updated information about the university in its current form (following its 1990 merger with Mercy College of Detroit) is available in a newer volume edited by Muller, Sabourin, and Cohen.³⁶

Other institutional biographies include books and articles about Fairfield University and Canisius College.³⁷ To the best of my knowledge, there are no recent book-length scholarly histories of Saint Peter’s University, the University of Scranton, Le Moyne College, or the (formerly Jesuit) Wheeling University, but there are short articles that address the history of some of these institutions, and primary sources can be found in the various school archives.³⁸

Although many of these institutional biographies were self-published directly by the universities rather than by independent, peer-reviewed academic presses, the quality of the scholarship is typically quite high. In addition, there are more targeted histories that tell the story of individual professional schools within the universities—nursing schools, law schools, medical schools, etc.—often published in those schools’ alumni magazines. Georgetown’s School of Foreign Service has a particularly rich collection of sources on its history.³⁹

In researching the history of Jesuit colleges that have closed, the best source is often the *Woodstock Letters*—a newsletter published 1872-1969 by Woodstock College in Maryland, and recently digitized by both the Jesuit Archives and the Jesuit

Online Library at Boston College.⁴⁰ Many issues include firsthand accounts of the histories of colleges that no longer exist. Given that these were typically written by Jesuits personally invested in building the schools, historians should be wary of bias, but overall the *Woodstock Letters* are a treasure trove of information about schools long forgotten. Other former Jesuit colleges, such as Gonzaga College in Washington, D.C., now operate as high schools and many have published information about their histories online and in the form of pamphlets that they are often willing to share. The Jesuit Archives and Resource Center in St. Louis and the Maryland Province Archive at Georgetown’s Lauinger Library contain valuable primary sources.⁴¹

Studying a topic as geographically, chronologically, and thematically diffuse as Jesuit higher education requires some resourcefulness but information does exist. The list of books mentioned here is not exhaustive, but can serve as a good starting point for researchers interested in this topic. As many of the older published sources age out of relevance, it is up to a new generation of scholars to retell the story and reinterpret this fascinating part of the history of the country and the Church. HJE

Notes

¹ Michael T. Rizzi, *Jesuit Colleges and Universities in the United States: A History* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2022).

² Gilbert J. Garraghan, S.J., *The Jesuits of the Middle United States Volumes I, II, and III* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1983).

³ R. Eric Platt, *Sacrifice and Survival: Identity, Mission, and Jesuit Higher Education in the American South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2014).

⁴ Gerald McKevitt, S.J., *Brokers of Culture: Italian Jesuits in the American West, 1848–1919* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2007).

⁵ Gerald McKevitt, S.J., “The Jump that Saved the Rocky Mountain Mission: Jesuit Recruitment and the Pacific Northwest,” *Pacific Historical Review* 55, no. 3 (1986): 427–453.

⁶ Gerald McKevitt, S.J. *The University of Santa Clara: A History, 1851–1977* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1979).

⁷ Arthur C. Bender, S.J., *A Brief History of the New York Province* (New York: New York Province of the Society of Jesus, n.d.).

⁸ James Leo Burke, S.J., *Jesuit Province of New England: The Formative Years* (Boston: Society of Jesus of New England, n.d.); James Leo Burke, S.J., *Jesuit Province of New England: The Expanding Years* (Boston: Society of Jesus of New England, 1986).

⁹ Gerald McKevitt, S.J., “Jesuit Higher Education in the United States,” *Mid-America: An Historical Review* 73, no. 3 (October 1991): 209–226.

¹⁰ Philip Gleason, “The First Century of Jesuit Higher Education in America,” *US Catholic Historian* 25, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 37–52.

¹¹ William J. McGucken, S.J., *The Jesuits and Education* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1932).

¹² Edward J. Power, *Catholic Higher Education in America: A History* (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1972).

¹³ Philip Gleason, *Contending with Modernity: Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); William P. Leahy, S.J., *Adapting to America: Catholics, Jesuits, and Higher Education in the Twentieth Century* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1991).

¹⁴ Tracy Schier and Cynthia Russett, eds., *Catholic Women's Colleges in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Michael Rizzi, "We've Been Here Before: A Brief History of Catholic Higher Education in America," *Journal of Catholic Higher Education* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2018): 153–174.

¹⁵ George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

¹⁶ Paul A. Fitzgerald, S.J., *The Governance of Jesuit Colleges in the United States, 1920–1970* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984); Kathleen A. Mahoney, *Catholic Higher Education in Protestant America: The Jesuits and Harvard in the Age of the University* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

¹⁷ Alice Gallin, O.S.U., ed., *American Catholic Higher Education, Essential Documents, 1967–1990* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992).

¹⁸ Philip Gleason, "Bibliographic Essay on the History of Catholic Higher Education," in *Handbook of Research on Catholic Higher Education*, eds. Thomas Hunt et al. (Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing, 2003): 95–113, 96.

¹⁹ John Gilmary Shea, *History of Georgetown University in the District of Columbia* (New York: P.F. Collier, 1891); John M. Daley, S.J., *Georgetown University: Origin and Early Years* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1957); Joseph T. Durkin, S.J., *Georgetown University: The Middle Years (1840–1900)* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1963).

²⁰ Joseph T. Durkin, S.J., *Georgetown University: First in the Nation's Capital* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1964).

²¹ Robert Emmett Curran, *A History of Georgetown University Volumes I, II, and III* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2010).

²² William C. McFadden, S.J., ed., *Georgetown at Two Hundred: Faculty Reflections on the University's Future* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1990).

²³ Giovanni Grassi, S.J., *Georgetown's Second Founder: Fr. Giovanni Grassi's News on the Present Condition of the Republic of the United States of North America*, trans. Roberto Severino (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2021).

²⁴ Thomas J. Shelley, *Fordham: A History of the Jesuit University of New York, 1841–2003* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016); Christa Klein, "The Jesuits and Catholic Boyhood in Nineteenth-century New York City: A Study of St. John's College and the College of St. Francis Xavier, 1846–1912." (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1976); Robert I. Gannon, S.J., *Up to the Present: The Story of Fordham* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1967).

²⁵ William Barnaby Faherty, S.J., *Better the Dream: Saint Louis University and Community, 1818–1968* (St. Louis: Saint Louis University, 1968); William Barnaby Faherty, S.J., "Nativism and Midwestern Education: The Experience of Saint Louis University, 1832–1856," *History of Education Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (Winter, 1968): 447–458; William Barnaby Faherty, S.J., *Saint Louis University: A Concise History* (St. Louis: Gas House Books, 2009).

²⁶ Dolores M. Burns, John W. Padberg, S.J., and John Waide, *Always at the Frontier: Saint Louis University 1818–2018* (St. Louis: Saint Louis University Press, 2017).

²⁷ Nicholas Varga, *Baltimore's Loyola, Loyola's Baltimore, 1851–1986*, (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1990).

²⁸ Anthony J. Kuzniewski, S.J., *Thy Honored Name: A History of the College of the Holy Cross, 1843–1994* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1999); David R. Contosta, *Saint Joseph's: Philadelphia's Jesuit University: 150 Years* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2000).

²⁹ David R. Dunigan, S.J., *A History of Boston College* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1947); Charles F. Donovan, S.J., David R. Dunigan, S.J., and Paul A. Fitzgerald, S.J., *History of Boston College: From the Beginnings to 1990* (Boston: Boston College, 1990); James O'Toole, *Ever to Excel: A History of Boston College* (Boston: Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies, 2022).

³⁰ Gerald McKeivitt, S.J., *The University of Santa Clara: A History, 1851–1977* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1979); Harold L. Stansell, S.J., *Regis: On the Crest of the West* (Denver: Regis University, 1977); Ron

Brockway, *Regis: Beyond the Crest* (Denver: Regis University, 2003); Walt Crowley, *Seattle University: A Century of Jesuit Education* (Seattle: Seattle University, 1991); Wilfred Schoenberg, *Gonzaga University: Seventy-five Years, 1887-1962* (Spokane: Gonzaga University, 1963); Kevin Starr, *Loyola Marymount University, 1911-2011: A Centennial History* (Los Angeles: Loyola Marymount University, 2011).

³¹ John Bernard, McGloin, *Jesuits by the Golden Gate* (San Francisco: University of San Francisco, 1972).

³² Bernard A. Cook, *Founded on Faith: A History of Loyola University New Orleans* (New Orleans: Loyola University, 2012).

³³ Charles J. Boyle, ed., *Twice Remembered: Moments in the History of Spring Hill College* (Mobile: Friends of the Spring Hill College Library, 1993); Charles J. Boyle, *A Pelican's Eye View: History of the Spring Hill College Campus* (Mobile: Spring Hill College, 1999); Charles J. Boyle, *Gleanings From the Spring Hill College Archives* (Mobile: Friends of the Spring Hill College Library, 2004). For more on Spring Hill, see also: Joseph C. Mulhern, S.J., "Spring Hill Observes Centennial," *Woodstock Letters* LIX, no. 3 (1930): 335–346; C. M. Widman, "Springhill College (1830–1898)," *Woodstock Letters* XXVII, no. 3 (1898): 267–278.

³⁴ Thomas J. Jablonsky, *Milwaukee's Jesuit University: Marquette, 1881–1981* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2007); Shirl Kasper, *Rockhurst University: The First 100 Years* (Kansas City: Rockhurst University, 2010); Dennis N. Mihelich, *The History of Creighton University: 1878–2003* (Omaha: Creighton University Press, 2006); Donald Gavin, *John Carroll University: A Century of Service* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2006); Ellen Skerrett, *Born in Chicago: A History of Chicago's Jesuit University* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008).

³⁵ Lee J. Bennis, S.J., *Continuity and Change: Xavier University, 1831–1981*. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1981).

³⁶ Herman J. Muller, S.J., *The University of Detroit, 1877–1977: A Centennial History* (Detroit: University of Detroit, 1976); Herman J. Muller, S.J., Mary Justine Sabourin, R.S.M., and Shari S. Cohen, eds., *Legacy of Excellence: A Continuing History of Jesuit and Mercy Higher Education in Detroit* (Detroit: University of Detroit Press, 2003).

³⁷ Joseph MacDonnell, S.J., *If These Stones Could Speak: The Phenomenal Growth of the Fairfield University Campus* (Fairfield: Fairfield University, 1996); Edward Dunn, S.J., "A Gymnasium in Buffalo: The Early Years of Canisius College," *Urban Education* 18, no. 4 (January 1984): 426–437; Thomas Harney, *History of Canisius College* (Burlington: Vantage Press, 1988).

³⁸ Alan Delozier, "The Society of Jesus and Academia in Nova Caesarea: Robert I. Gannon, SJ & the Re-Birth of St. Peter's College, 1930–1936," *New Jersey Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 4, no. 1 (Winter, 2018): 98–129; Richard Grady, "Scranton University," *Jesuit Educational Quarterly* V, no. 2 (September 1942): 145–147.

³⁹ Georgetown University Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service and Washington Custom Media, *SFS 100: A Century of Service* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2019); Seth Tillman, *Georgetown's School of Foreign Service: The First 75 Years* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1994); Margery Boichel Thompson, ed., *Beacons: Great Teachers of the Georgetown School of Foreign Service* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1994).

⁴⁰ The Jesuit Online Library, "Woodstock Letters," <https://jesuitonlinelibrary.bc.edu/?a=cl&cl=CL1&sp=wlet>; Jesuit Archives and Resource Center, "Woodstock Letters," <https://jesuitarchives.org/woodstock-letters/>

⁴¹ Georgetown University Archival Resources, "Archives of the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus," <https://findingaids.library.georgetown.edu/repositories/15/resources/12505>; The Jesuit Archives and Research Center, www.jesuitarchives.org