LA SALLE’S FIRST 100 ITALIANS

One of the most heart-warming of human stories, one that recurs so frequently as to make “America” a magic word among all the people of the world, is the story of a poor immigrant, coming to this land of opportunity, his only asset a hopeful heart. And from that humble start, success comes to some, or fame, or fortune.

For most, it is at least a fresh start, which time and faith may justify. It takes three generations to make a great writer, it is said, and the same may be true of a great college, or a great family. But the signs begin to show early, and the record of the first 100 boys of Italian descent graduated from La Salle promises much for their nationality, and for the College and community they represent.

The first Italian boys graduated in 1935, if the record is right, and they stand as a kind of symbol marking the end of one era and the start of another for their nationality. The interesting coincidence is that in that year La Salle too was entering a new phase, unmatched by anything in its history.

From that time on, the history of La Salle College and the story of the Italian people of Philadelphia are strikingly similar — stories of gradual emergence from second-class status to one of vital influence in the civic and business and cultural affairs of the city.

Back in 1900 and 1910, the years of the largest Italian immigrations, the glorious days of La Salle, whose graduate rolls were filled with the names of men who had gained great prominence, were almost over. The old La Salle had felt the full force of a gradual social change that had been altering the face of Philadelphia. The city was expanding. Business was demanding cheaper labor. The immigration of southern and eastern Europeans, mostly skilled artisans, was supplying not only the needed manpower, but larger markets as well. Meantime, the Irish and German groups, relatively prosperous, began to move to the suburbs. The residential area surrounding La Salle at Broad and Stiles changed slowly into clusters of rooming houses, industrial plants, small stores.

Poor transportation prevented those who had moved to suburban areas from attending La Salle, and the enrollment then consisted largely of sons of Irish and German families who remained in the neighborhood, and who were able to afford little more than a high school education for their sons.

There La Salle remained for a generation, working steadily but with no marked progress, witnessing still another upheaval in the neighborhood population. The Negroes had begun coming in from the South, answering again the demand for manpower in a growing industrial community. The immigrant Italian families, seeking a higher standard of living, settled in the “Little Italys” of South Philadelphia and West Philadelphia, there being content to live to themselves with the minimum of education required for economic survival. And very few could afford a college education for their sons.

The decades of the 1920’s and 1930’s were very difficult years for these boys. Precipitated into a cultural life about which their parents could offer no advice, with little community spirit to help them, amid the racial tensions and the bewilderment and unrest common to any period of social adjustment, the American-born Italian boys became of age.

Almost all these boys went to work immediately after leaving high school, to help ease the financial burden on their parents. A handful, fired with a desire to pull themselves above their boyhood environment, to help break down the social barriers of the Little Italys, eager to get an education which would enable them to take advantage of the opportunities America had promised their parents, these were the boys who came to the Brothers at La Salle.

A hundred came and graduated between 1935 and 1945, and from the Brothers they received what they most needed. Financial help was theirs, a tradition among the Christian Brothers for deserving young men. And, in addition, they found the opportunities for personal growth which a college like La Salle offers. It enabled them to minimize their nationality-consciousness, to begin to feel the strength of their heritage amid the weakness of their environment, and to become with time an influential part of an homogenous society.

That has always been the aim of the Brothers at La Salle:
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DISTRIBUTION OF LA SALLE COLLEGE ALUMNI
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA WITHIN 60 MILES OF PHILADELPHIA

MAPS DRAWN BY ROBERT F. CAIRO — LA SALLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL — CLASS OF 1956

Alabama ........................................... 2
California ......................................... 18
Connecticut ....................................... 9
Delaware ........................................ 76
Florida ............................................... 12
Georgia ............................................. 12
Illinois ............................................... 13
Indiana ............................................. 7
Kansas ............................................... 1
Louisiana ........................................... 1
Maine ............................................... 2
Maryland .......................................... 26
Massachusetts ................................... 11
Michigan ........................................... 13
Minnesota ......................................... 9
Nebraska .......................................... 76
New Mexico ....................................... 1
New York ......................................... 41
New Jersey ........................................ 395
North Carolina .................................. 13
Ohio ............................................... 10
Oklahoma ......................................... 1
Oregon ............................................. 1
Pennsylvania .....................................3949
Rhode Island .................................... 3
South Carolina ................................... 1
South Dakota ..................................... 1
Tennessee ......................................... 1
Texas ............................................... 4
Vermont .......................................... 2
Virginia .......................................... 15
Washington ...................................... 10
West Virginia ................................... 4
Washington, D. C. ..............................13

Total: 4645
MASQUE PRESENTS "SOUTH PACIFIC" . . .

The Masque of La Salle College will present the first local non-professional production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "South Pacific" on the evenings of May 9 to 12.

Dan Rodden, '41, will stage and direct the show, marking the third consecutive Masque musical featuring the melodies of Richard Rodgers, and the second Rodgers-Hammerstein venture.

Male roles have been taken by La Salle students; open auditions for the female roles have produced such outstanding talent that the play is assured of being the Masque's most successful musical.

A special performance of "South Pacific" will be given Sunday evening, May 13, for former members of The Masque and Theatre at La Salle. Cocktail party and reception will precede the show.

VARSITY CLUB ACTIVE . . .

President Tom McGowan announces that the Varsity Club is sponsoring its first annual Varsity Week, May 12 to 19, the last week of the school sports calendar.

The Dad Vail Regatta, on Saturday, May 12, will be followed by a reunion of Varsity men at the Boat House.

On Founders Day, Tuesday, May 15, a baseball game with Albright and a track meet with Villanova is scheduled. Earlier, a review of the ROTC units will be conducted during the formal academic exercises.

On Wednesday, May 16, letters and sweaters will be formally presented at a dinner in Leonard Hall. And climaxes the big week is the Varsity Dance on Saturday, May 19, in the College Auditorium.

Alumni interested can get information and tickets by contacting Tom McGowan at TE 9-2719; George Harkins at MI 4-8472; Jim Hatch in Jersey at LI 7-3041, or the College Bookstore.

LA SALLE'S FIRST 100, ITALIANS

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over half of the honors men were Italian, and five out of seven awards went to Italians. In that decade, a fourth of all the awards have gone to Italian men. Their record on the athletic fields and in extra-curricular activities is equally impressive.

What are they doing now? Twenty-seven are doctors or dentists, eight are certified public accountants, five are priests, six are lawyers, nine are teachers, forty-five are represented in other occupations: stock brokers, policemen, salesmen, business men.

The record of the first 100 men is an inspiration to all the boys of Italian descent who have been coming to La Salle in increasing numbers since. The opportunity for personal and group progress is here with the Brothers at La Salle, if a young man has but the courage to reach out for it.

DR. BRACELAND HONORED . . .

The coveted Shaffrey Award of St. Joseph's College was presented on April 8 to Dr. Francis J. Braceland, former La Salle Alumni President, Medical Director of the Institute of Living in Hartford, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Yale University, and President of the American Psychiatric Association.

The award, named in honor of Clarence E. Shaffrey, S.J., former chairman of the pre-med department at St. Joseph's, is presented annually to men who have distinguished themselves in their particular phase of medicine. The recipient is selected by ballot of over 300 Medical alumni of the College.


LA SALLE BOOSTERS . . .

Our thanks to the following boosters of La Salle—who have informed the Placement Office of job openings for students and grads: Joe Eckert, '49; Pete Kelly, '49; Bill Kohler, '53; Jim Brett, '50; Joe Doughty, '56 EvD; Maurice McCarthy, '54; Dick Bourne, '52; John McCauley, '52; Joe Altman, '48; John Protei, '50; Al Pitner, '49; Bob Mauger, '55 EvD; Ted Bronson, '54; Lou LeHane, '54; Ed Nederostek, '49; John Hays, EvD; John Basquill, '56; Charlie Halpin, '44.

More of this kind of alumni interest is invited. You can be especially helpful to members of the Class of '54, just returning to civilian life. Call VI 8-1100 when you hear of a job opening—part time for students, full time for grads and Evening Division men.

LA SALLE ALUMNUS
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