

# CATHOLIC STANDARD

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*Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*

## One Hundred Years with the Jesuits in British Guiana

1857, – 1957

**Part VII: St. Stanislaus College**

# St. Stanislaus College

## The Catholic Grammar School

**WHEREVER** the Jesuits go throughout the world they start colleges for the education of youth so it is no surprise to find that one of Bishop Etheridge's first pre-occupations was the starting of a Catholic College. The College was founded on the 1st of May, 1866 under the name of the Catholic Grammar School. Bishop Etheridge, who was also Superior, put it under the care of Fr. Langton but his tenure of office was brief for he died in the following August of yellow fever in Berbice at the early age of 36. Thus began a long series of trials - changes of masters, changes of site - which dogged the College through its early years. Brickdam Presbytery first housed the school but on November 3rd, 1867, it was transferred to the Sacred Heart Compound, Main Street, and placed under the charge of Fr. Charles Wilson. How much teaching was done by the Fathers at this period is not clear, but it is clear that much of their time was taken up with pastoral duties and, in fact the expression used in the records of the time until 1880 is the same as is now used for the Manager of a Primary School.

Mr. C. B. King\*, an old Stonyhurst boy, was teaching at this time and under his charge the school was moved to a site in Waterloo Street on September 28th, 1869, but it did not remain very long there either, for, on June 1st, 1871, it was back again at Brickdam Presbytery under Father Whyte. The Presbytery then was in the same compound as the beautiful new Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on which the builders were still working. Mr. King continued to teach and with him we find Fr. Joseph Foxwell in 1875 and Fr. John Hartell in 1876 combining their other duties with the care of the Grammar School. It was under these difficult circumstances that in 1876, in spite of the fact that the school received "a handsome Government grant", Bishop Etheridge decided to close it down.

The Father General of the Society, Father Beck, earnestly urged Bishop Etheridge to re-open the school. This the Bishop had every intention of doing, although it proved to be the work of his successor, Bishop Butler, just four years later.

It was in the early part of 1880 that Fr Charles Wilson was selected by Bishop Butler to carry out Fr. General's wish and restart the school. He was stationed at the time at Malgre Tout and he used to cross over daily to teach his boys. working his mission as well he might when he got back in the evening. The result was that his health suffered and a few years afterwards he had to be invalided home.

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\* Mr. C. B. King was grandfather of our present Fr. John King, S.J., one of the four old boys of the College to enter the Society of Jesus and return to work here during the Century.

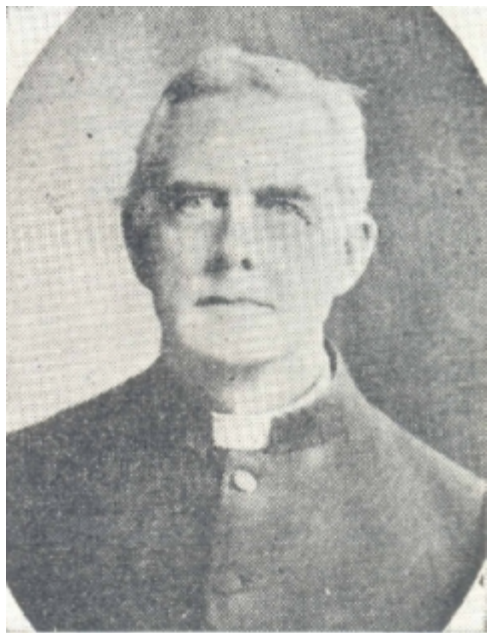
On his return to British Guiana as a priest. Fr. King was for a short time on the staff of the College.

## FATHER CLEMENT BARRAUD (1880 - 1900)

IN October of the same year – 1880 - the care of the Grammar School was entrusted to one who was to devote his energies to it for the next '20 years, Fr. Clement Barraud, S.J. When he took over., he tells us, there were fifteen boys and an Assistant Master whose salary was double what the school brought in - so financial difficulties are nothing new in the history of the College.. Mr. C. King was grandfather of our present Fr. John King, S.J., one of the four old boys of the College to enter the Society of Jesus and return to work here during the Century.

On his return to British Guiana as a priest,. Fr. King was for a short time on the staff of the College. The teaching staff besides lay masters and mistresses, included successively Fr. Rigby and Fr. Barker. About 1890, the staff was joined by Fr. O'Donnell and in 1900 came Br. Reynolds who had been teaching small boys in British Honduras and in Jamaica.

For some seventeen or eighteen years of this time, the School worked in three class rooms on the ground floor of the old Brickdam Presbytery which was burnt down along with Cathedral in 1913. For a time it was housed in what had been the temporary pro-Cathedral, erected for use while the Cathedral was being built and specifically designed by Br. Castellani, at Bishop Butler's request, to be used as a school when it should cease to be a church. At another time the Guild room was also used and, towards the end of Fr. Barraud's regime, a new school was built on the site of the present St. Mary's, Brickdam, with money specially collected for that purpose.



**Fr. CLEMENT BARRAUD, S.J.**  
**Headmaster for twenty years.**

## ST. STANISLAUS

ALTHOUGH known through all these years as the Catholic Grammar School, the Patron from its earliest days had been St. Stanislaus. The feast of St. Stanislaus was always the great day in the College, celebrated with a College Mass and a holiday. Fr. Barraud himself composed the hymn to St. Stanislaus, both music and words, still sung by the boys. The last entry in the College Log, found in his handwriting on December 12, 1900. concerns a statue for which the boys subscribed on St. Clement's day. That statue now stands at the main entrance of the College - it is the statue of St. Stanislaus. At a College concert in 1902, organised in celebration of the consecration of Bishop Galton, we find the name used on the programme "St. Stanislaus Grammar School."

Fr. George Pollen succeeded Fr. Barraud in 1900, by this time in the more commodious quarters on the site of the present St. Mary's. Early on Fr. Pollen writes : "Another classroom has been constructed; we have also added to the length of the hall and built a fine stage which will enable us to give our entertainments and exhibitions on our own premises."

So the school was developing. About this time -in the early 1900's - one hundred names appeared on the register. The spiritual side of the boys' training was also keenly developed, as shown by the

accounts of Sodality meetings and weekly Mass, retained to this day, and annual retreats. In 1907 Fr. Beauclerk, then Superior,(and himself in charge of the 'Preparatory Division'), bought a property at the eastern end of the present site of the College. The dwelling house was converted into the College and the stretch of land into a playground and, once again, the school moved. Now it was that the title was officially changed to "St. Stanislaus College," the formal dedication and blessing took place on the 22nd October of that year.

Fr. Parker Lander had by this time succeeded Father Pollen as Headmaster. Two years later Fr. Hornyold, who had succeeded as Superior, added the purchase of another house thereby doubling the capacity of the school. In 1910 came Fr. John Besant, still remembered with the greatest affection by his old boys for his seven years as Headmaster to 1917. Following his death in Barbados in 1944, one of these old boys wrote of him in the St. Stanislaus Magazine: "He was a man of varied interests. He loved books and taught his boys to love them too; a builder of model yachts he made his boys interested in this hobby. One of his boys gained first prize for a model yacht made under his direction in a competition open to Scouts of the whole Empire. He was a keen golfer and a popular football referee remembered with respect by many a footballer of yesteryear. "Some of us whom he taught still have vivid recollections of him. Memory brings him back not only reading exciting books to us in class ,and working in shirt sleeves sandpapering wood for model yachts, but also preaching at Main Street a first-rate sermon on the occasion of the Centenary of the restoration of the Society of Jesus, .and giving a farewell spiritual discourse in the pro-cathedral to the little group of College boy who were leaving the Colony to take part in World War I."

Working part of the time under Fr. Besant was Fr. Alban Robinson; he it was who, in 1910, had the college Sodality, which had existed from t'he,early days of the school, aggregated to the Prima Primeria in Rome. He was one of the pioneer scout masters of this Colony and while teaching at St. Stanislaus founded Troop IV. These college scouts did gallant work at the time of the Cathedral fire in 1913. In 1917 Fr. Paul Miller succeeded Fr. Besant as Headmaster continuing at the College 'until his death in 1921. An interval followed with Fr. Denis Whiteside acting as Head. In 1923 came Father John McGowan for one year.

### **FR. GEORGE WELD (1924 – 1932)**

In 1924, Fr. George Weld, S.J., on the staff from 1923, took over as Head Master. In his eight years to 1932, the year of his appointment as Bishop, he was largely responsible for raising the College to the status it enjoys today. The scholastic standard rose, for the first time the College attempted successfully the Higher Certificate examination. Year by year, Fr. Weld gave a telling report to parents at the Annual Prize-giving. Amateur theatrical performances both of present and old boys, flourished under Fr. J Goodwin and, later Fr. A. Parkinson.

Fr. Weld personally supervised the building of the first wing of the present College building. It was blessed by Bishop Galton and officially opened by Sir Gordon Guggisburg, K.C.M.G. on 17th January, 1929. Fr. Weld had the joy of moving over from the two old houses at the opposite end of the ground that had so well served more than a generation of boys. So St. Stanislaus was all set for the sweep forward that it was now to make.



**OPENING OF THE FIRST WING OF ST. STANISLAUS COLLEGE, 17th JANUARY, 1929.**  
**(left to right): Major W. Bain Gray, Director of Education, Fr. J. L. Morrison, S.J., Superior,**  
**Sir Gordon Guggishurg, K.C.M.G., Bishop Galton and Fr. George Weld, S.J., Headmaster.**

## **Part II**

*(Compiled by FR. B. SCANNELL, S.J., Headmaster from 1949 to the present time).*

Fr. J. Marrion succeeded Fr. Weld. It may be well to put in a word here on the 'Games Side' of St. Stanislaus. It was Fr. Marrion who secured the present 'Sea Wall Ground' as a playing field for the College.

The College Annual Sports Meeting had long been a Red Letter Day. The College 'Houses' - Etheridge, Butler and Galton - were formed primarily for the purpose of competition at sport.

### **INTER-COLLEGIATE COMPETITIONS**

In May, 1933 the Governor, Sir Edward Denham, K.C.M.G., presented a cup for Inter-Collegiate Athletics Competition between the three Schools, Queen's College, Berbice High School and St. Stanislaus College, In the Autumn of 1933, Mr. C. R. Jacob presented a cup for Cricket and in 1935, Mr. Francis Dias presented a cup for Football.

The Denham Cup we have never won; the Jacob Cup we have won three or four times; the Dias Cup we have won more frequently, including 4 times in the last 7 years; but only once (1956) have we won both Cups in the same year.

We have had great Cricketing names at the College: the Christiani's, the Wights, the Thomas's, Peter Bayley, McWatt, who did well in Intercolonial and West Indian Cricket in more recent years.

Many old boys have represented British Guiana at Football both in ancient and modern days. But there is no West Indian Football Team, and Football has not captured the imagination to the extent that Cricket has done.

## **SCHOLARSHIPS**

It was during Fr. Marrion's period that the College began winning the Guiana Scholarship: Percy de Caires 1932, Alphonse Lee 1935, Bertram Grace 1938, Mervyn Belgrave 1941, Jocelyn D'Oliveira 1948, Jerome de Freitas 1955.

In 1938 Walter Harrison was runner up to Grace; 1942, Carl da Silva was runner-up, and so was Michael Wooming in 1946, and John Searwar in 1951. When Jerry de Freitas won in 1955 we secured the first three places with Carlyle Moore and Kenneth Khan tying for second place.

The University College of the West Indies is new. I am convinced that it has a very important part to play in the future of the West Indies and the whole Caribbean area. To win an Open Scholarship to U.C.W.I. is a greater achievement than winning a Guiana Scholarship. So far we have not won an Open Scholarship. We have had a number of Exhibitions and local scholarships: Desmond Newman - 1950, John Searwar - 1951, Honnett Searwar - 1954, Kenneth Khan and Carlyle Moore - 1955, Anthony Clarke - 1956. Through all these years our numbers were growing. There were 137 boys at the College in 1935; 217 in 1939; 280 in 1946 and 300 in 1950.

## **THE PROBLEM OF EXPANSION**

THERE had been about 100 boys when the College was built in 1928-29. Fr. Marrion reconstructed the Upper Flat of the building to contain Physics and Chemistry Laboratories intended for work up to Higher Certificate. Gradually this was all used for classes, except for the double purpose Physics - Chemistry Laboratory.

During Fr. Smith's years as Principal, the people of the Colony became education-conscious and increased applications were notable. By 1946, it became clear that we had to develop into a two stream school: there was no alternative. Very Reverend Fr. Guilly, Superior of the Mission, undertook the building of the new Wing which was officially opened by the Officer Administering the Government, the Hon. John Gutch, C.M.G., O.B.E., on 5th November, 1952. Numbers were now 373.

The two Science Laboratories on the ground floor of the New Wing were completed by Easter 1954, but it was not until September, 1955, that we were able to start 6th Form Physics. There can be no VI<sup>th</sup> Form Chemistry until we have at least one more Science Master and one more Laboratory.

With the growth in numbers had come the change over from the old School Certificate and Higher Certificate to the new General Certificate of Education (G.C.E.) Ordinary Level and Advanced Level.

The difference is very striking. In 1945 (with 290 boys), 5 boys sat Higher Certificate and 28 sat School Certificate/ In 1957 (with 363 boys), 22 are preparing to sit Advanced Level and 83 the

Ordinary Level, (of these, 46 are taking six subjects or more; a number are only taking one or two subjects). Almost all these 105 boys will get certificates because you get least 5 (including English Language) at the School Certificate. To offset this, the pass mark in Ordinary Level is now 50% instead of 33%.

## THE STRUGGLE

WRITING of his taking over the Catholic Grammar School in 1880, Fr. Barraud said: "From the outset we had no chance against Queen's College: for not only had it generous Government aid and a thoroughly efficient staff, but it naturally picked up all the children of Educated parents, officials, clergymen, etc."

For the ten years 1914 to 1924, the number of the Fathers at the College was reduced from 4 to 3. There were seven priests from 1935 to 1938. At the outbreak of the 1939 war and for another ten years there were only six priests. From 1950 there have been seven "permanent" priests. Before that there had been frequent changes among the teaching priest, because of shortage of priests in all parts of the Mission.

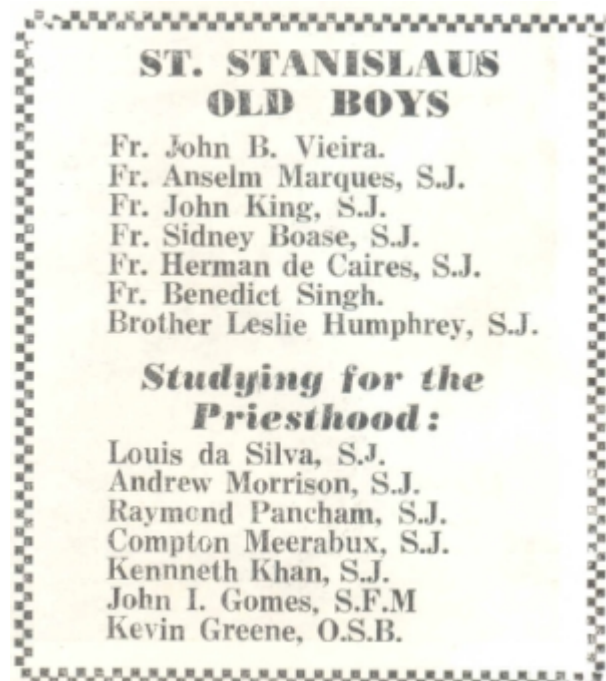
During the period 1940 to 1946 there were 15 different Lay Masters and two different Mistresses at the College. We could not build up a permanent staff because we could not pay a decent salary. In 1942 our one and only lay B.A. was receiving \$70.00 a month (with no increments or pension or leave facilities) and the other 5 lay masters, two of them married, were receiving less.

## ST. STANISLAUS ASSOCIATION

IN 1942. Very Reverend Fr. Morrison, Superior of the Mission, sent a 'Humble Petition' to the Governor for an Annual Grant of \$5,500 for the College. This was rejected. This rejection and the fact that the College was running at an Annual loss of about \$2,000 was made public and in consequence the St. Stanislaus College Association came into being.

This annual loss was very great in spite of the low salary scale of the Staff. People are very slow to realise the cost of Secondary Education. For instance today it costs over \$300.00 a year to educate every girl at Bishop's High School, even though the fees are only \$75.00 a year. It is to be hoped that sometime some one will write the History of the Association. Two tasks faced the Association in its drive to give aid to the College: the annual wiping-out of the College Deficit and the planning for future development.

To take the development first: the New Wing and Laboratories have cost about \$50,000.00 The debt today is only \$6,500.00. That is a grand achievement, deserving of the thanks not only of the Fathers of



the Society of Jesuits but more so of the Catholic and Non-Catholic parents of the Colony whose children were, are, and will be educated at St. Stanislaus College.

The Annual running cost of the College has been kept as low as possible, but the salary scale of the lay staff was not attractive: a boy leaving Form 5 and starting at, say, one of the Banks would begin with a bigger salary than his Form 5 Masters had after years of service.

In November, 1951 Mr. John Fernandes introduced a motion in the Legislative Council that a grant of \$5,000.00 be given annually to the College. This was passed unanimously. But it was not until this grant was increased to \$20,000 in 1955 that a really increased salary scale could be introduced. The salary scale is \$25.00 a month less than the Bishops High School Scale, and it carries no pension nor leave facilities. -In September 1957, with the help and advice of Mr. C. F. de Caires, President of the Association, a Pension Scheme was started..

## **THE FUTURE**

THE future, fortunately, remains in the hands of God. But God does use human instruments, you and me. With the loyal support of our Catholic parents, of the Association, of the many old boys, the future of the College seems full of hope and promise. Our Catholic Primary Schools are the best in the Colony; they give us excellent material to work on. It is up to all of us to complete the God-given task.



**FOUR HEADMASTERS - Bishop Weld, S.J. (Headmaster from 1924 to 1932), Fr. John Marrion, S.J. (1932 to 1941), Fr. Francis Smith, S.J. (1941 to 1949) and Fr. Brian Scannell S.J. (1949 to the present time).**

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