

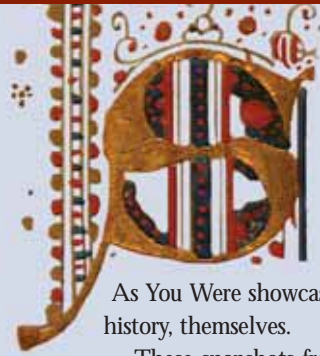
as you were

BY KRISTIN E. ETU '91

# Pages from the Past



What was once old is now new again as the college's Office of Archives makes its extensive collection of Canisius chronicles and other rare artifacts available to a world-wide audience.



Since it was first published in winter 2000, *Canisius College Magazine* has featured historical snapshots from the college's past in its special As You Were section, located on the back cover. It can be a photograph of a particular dignitary who visited Canisius or even a recollection written by a former student. And sometimes the

As You Were showcases former Canisius students who became part of history, themselves.

These snapshots from the past are among hundreds of stories – all waiting to be re-told – tucked away on the second floor of the Andrew L. Bouwhuis Library, home to the Rev. J. Clayton Murray, S.J. Archives. Although the office has been in existence for more than 40 years (it was formally founded in 1960), many people within the college community, alumni included, are unaware of the remarkable historical artifacts housed in this virtual treasure trove.

"We have a handwritten letter in French, dated 1846, from Bishop Baptiste (then Bishop of New York) to Bishop Timon of Buffalo stating that a Catholic college was to be established in Buffalo, New York," says **Karen E. Bordonaro, PhD**, former associate library director for archives, special collections & information literacy, who now serves as reference librarian at Brock University in St. Catherine's, Ontario.

There is also a list of Official Freshman Rules, which dates back to the late 1930s. It was used by the Senior Rules Committee to initiate underclassmen. Included among the many humorous rules:

*Freshman caps must be worn to all school functions, and to and from school.*

*Pipes, knickers, cigars, lighters, bow ties, moustaches or gaudy clothing are absolutely prohibited.*

*Freshman must enter and leave the school by the rear entrance only.*

"The role of the archives is to collect and preserve the important history of the college and make it available to Canisius staff, administrators, faculty, alumni or members of the general public who would like to do research," says Associate Vice President of Library and Information Systems **Joel A. Cohen, PhD**.

Cohen further explains the Office of Archives collects anything of historical value that is officially published by the college.

That includes copies of *The Griffin*, which date back to 1933 when the student newspaper was first published; the former alumni publication, *The Chronicle*; and its successor, *Canisius College Magazine*. News releases, yearbooks and course catalogs are also archived, as well as the histories of each college building, the academic curriculums and the lay people who worked at the college. (Information on Jesuits is stored at Loyola Hall, by Rev. Joseph Lux, S.J.)

While much of the history amassed in archives and photographic collections, there are enough Canisius artifacts to fill several display cases throughout the library. These time capsules, of sorts, change each semester and have included such exhibits as "World War II and the Boys of Canisius," which paid tribute to the Canisius men who served in the War and illustrated the effects the War had on campus life. One of the most recent exhibits, "Canisius and the Freshman Experience," includes Canisius memorabilia from the 1930s-1950s such as early student handbooks, freshman caps and kazoos. Another exhibit, "The Wehle Collection of Whale Artifacts" features items such as whale bones, carvings and art from the personal collection of the late Richard J. Wehle, who was a prominent Buffalo businessman and Canisius College benefactor.



Perhaps though the most interesting and little-known relics that make up the college's archives are housed in the Balling Special Collections Room, home to an extensive rare book collection. Appraised at \$145,000, the Koberger Bible is the most valuable item in the collection. What makes the Koberger so extraordinary is that it was printed in German in 1483 – decades before Lutheran Church Founder Martin Luther's famous translation of the Bible in the early 1500s.

"People thought Luther's translation was the first German Bible," says Bordnaro. "Actually, it wasn't, it was just the most popular."

A 16th century version of the Koran is also preserved in the rare book collection. An inscription on the inside cover gives a clue as to its origination: *Taken from the Turks in a battle in Hungary before 1571 by Count Schwarzburg.*

The college also owns several 15th century Italian Books of Hours, prayers which were read in Latin by lay people for the hours of the day. The pages are made of vellum (animal skin), adorned with calligraphy and illuminated with solid gold leaf.

"As far as we know, most of the rare books were brought over with the German Jesuits who founded Canisius," says Bordnaro. "Although we don't have a lot of information about the specific items, we do know that many were created before the age of printing."

The Office of Archives takes great efforts to prevent further deterioration of these rare books. The room temperature is maintained at 65 degrees and the humidity kept low. The lights are mostly left off except when the room is made available to visitors from the Canisius community.

"Preservation of these items is a high priority but it must be also balanced with the educational value," says Bordnaro, who notes that faculty bring students to the rare collections room. "They may never see something this old in their lifetime."



The **Koberger Bible**, printed in Nuremberg, Germany in 1483 is the most valuable item in the archives collection.

While archives is home to some of the college's most ancient documents, staying abreast of the latest technology is also high priority. In January 2003, the office moved from the basement of Christ the King Chapel to the second floor of the library, to provide a more user-friendly location for visitors. At the same time, 500 of the college's 2,000 historical photographs were scanned, digitized and made available on-line at [www.canisius.edu/archives](http://www.canisius.edu/archives). Most recently, the college received funding to digitize the 1,500 remaining photographs in the collection.

"The archives have a much greater public face now," says Cohen. "It is much more visible to people on campus and more accessible to people off campus."

Following a trend among other educational institutions, archives launched its first on-line exhibit in winter 2004 on composer **Rev. Ludwig Bonvin, S.J.**, a Canisius music professor from the late 1890s to the early 1900s. The exhibit, which was a collaboration of work between **Bordnaro, Jane Cary**, associate pro-

fessor of fine arts and director of music, and **Katherine M. Liebner '07**, a history/political science dual major, features Bonvin images, music scores and digitized sound recordings, and has been viewed as far away as Switzerland.

A second on-line exhibit, "World War II and the Boys of Canisius," was created by Archives Technician **Nancy E. Noel**, and includes a piece on **Rev. J. Clayton Murray, S.J.**, and how he kept in touch with Canisius students and alumni who served in World War II. According to Cohen, these on-line exhibits are an effective way to share information from Canisius with the rest of the world.

"Instead of having this information stored away in cardboard boxes where no one ever sees it, now it's on-line where anyone can access and enjoy it," says Cohen.

And with hundreds of stories from *alma mater's* history still waiting to be told, the Office of Archives will keep busy – bringing new life to the Canisius chronicles of days gone by.



A **kazoo** (exact origin unknown) is displayed as part of the **Canisius and the Freshman Experience** collection.



One of several in the collection, this 15th century **Book of Hours** contains prayers which were read in Latin by lay people.



In the late 1930s, freshmen were required to wear a **beanie** during all campus events.



## AS YOU WERE



In this issue of *Canisius College Magazine*, we showcase 40 years of extraordinary Canisius history housed in the college's archives (page 30). Much of that history was preserved by **Rev. J. Clayton Murray, S.J.**, director of the college's archives from 1965-1983. But it was Father Murray's work as a Jesuit and professor that led him to become part of the college's historical chronicles, which he so devoutly maintained.

When World War II interrupted student life at Canisius, Father Murray kept up communications with the college's servicemen. He mailed *The Griffin* overseas and when the military would no longer ship the student newspaper, Father Murray created a Canisius newsletter, which was sent to the servicemen first-class. He also forwarded waterproof confessional cards (one in Latin, the universal language of the Church and one in English), so Canisius servicemen could seek confession from any foreign priest.

After the war, Father Murray continued teaching philosophy but by 1965 he began working part-time as the college archivist. Ten years later, he became the full-time director of archives. As director, he documented 125 years of Canisius history in *Datelines: A Historical Retrospective of the Last 125 Years of Canisius College*.

Canisius' faithful servant died in 1988 at age 88 but his contributions to Canisius can be relived by visiting the office which bears his name: the **Rev. J. Clayton Murray, S.J. Archives**.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CANISIUS COLLEGE ARCHIVES