



NOTES FROM THE DEKOVEN CENTER ARCHIVES

ISSUE 2 - MARCH 2018

The Buildings of Racine College as they now stand, August, 1876.



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DeKoven Center Archives*

Issue No. 2 – March 2018

Welcome to the second issue of “Notes from the DeKoven Center Archives.” Our work at the Archives continues. Father Jim Braun is finishing the data entry of the *The Students’ Records*. There are 3,197 student names in the listing. Information about these students can now be searched without using the old, delicate bound leather volume. John Magerus continues to work with the files of the Community of Saint Mary. So far he has assembled 8 archival boxes of photographs from this collection. In another development, the collection of Dr. Bardenwerper, who for many years was the historian of the Milwaukee diocese, was moved to Taylor Hall following his recent death. As the collection at DeKoven continues to grow, we become more and more aware of the significant role this archival depository plays in preserving the history of the Episcopal Church in Wisconsin.

**The “Adventure-filled” Life
of Ivy May Bolton,
Sister Mercedes, C.S.M.**

The Community of Saint Mary was created to help others: the homeless, the ill, orphans, and those seeking a good education. Over the history of the community, those who became sisters represented a rich variety of family and educational backgrounds. They brought their many talents to the programs and institutions founded by the sisters.

Sister Mercedes, who generally wrote historical fiction, was one of the

more successful and unique writers of the community. She was born Ivy May Bolton in London, England on May 18, 1879. The Bolton family is one of the oldest in England, tracing its heritage back to the Norman Conquest. Her father, Reginald Pelham Bolton was an architect, inventor and engineer. Her mother was Kate Alice Behenna who died on August 15, 1891 in England. Reginald moved his family which included Ivy, her younger brother Guy, and his second wife Ethelind Huyck, to New York in 1894. He opened an office there, working on the first ‘sky-scraper’ and becoming a consulting engineer for the New York City water supply and the Central & Hudson River Railroad. Ivy was sent to St. Gabriel’s School in Peekskill, New York which was operated by the Community of Saint Mary. She graduated from the school in 1898 and worked as a teacher and librarian in New York until 1911 when she



Figure 1 Sister Mercedes, C.S.M.

entered the Community of Saint Mary. She made her life vows on August 18, 1914.

Sister Mercedes' brother Guy (1884-1979) was a successful author, primarily of the "books" for musical comedies. He worked with some of the most significant people in American theatrical history, including George and Ira Gershwin, Oscar Hammerstein, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, and Irving Berlin. The Boltons were story tellers.

Sister Mercedes taught English and History and worked as a librarian at the schools operated by the Community of Saint Mary. It was while at Kemper Hall in Kenosha that she came into contact with Janet Robson¹ who provided this description of Sister in her unpublished autobiography:

Sister Mercedes, [was] quite literally the Patron Saint of the lower school.... She wrote stories for children under her own name Ivy Bolton, and she was always surrounded by a spell-bound circle of little people, weaving endless yarns that were a junior version of the soap-operas; always with a moral and always to-be-continued-in-our-next...; the heroes and heroines always of course of the Anglican persuasion. Often the group of babes would be augmented by some of us older ones and a teacher or two as she spun her magic yarns." (p. 62)

Although we don't know when Sister started writing stories, we do have a good idea of her publication history. Her first book, *The Young Knight*, appeared in 1923, and her last, *Father Junipero Serra*, in 1952. Between these dates there were more than a dozen books published as well as

¹ Janet Robson Kennedy, unpublished autobiography, *A Coat of Many Colours*, p. 62. Kennedy entered the Community of Saint Mary at St. Mary's Convent in Kenosha and it was there that she met Sister Mercedes. Kennedy's passion was art and

numerous stories, poems, and even a play. The titles give a good indication of the content and provide an explanation for the title of this article: they are often adventure stories. Among the books were *The Young Cavaliers* (1924); *Rebels in Bondage* (1938); and *Raeburn Unafraid* (1942). Her stories appeared in a variety of magazines in the United States, Canada and England. Some of them were serialized over several issues of a publication.

It is evident that Sister devoted a great deal of time and effort to historical research. She had a great knowledge of English history, the history of the crusades, and early American history. She was also aware of the changes in her own times, demonstrating in several of her writings the importance of girls and women in historical events. In "Walsingham of Walsingham: A Tale of the First Crusade," we find this statement: " 'Maids be just as much use as lads,' Constance Walsingham flared." ² Although it would be an exaggeration to call her a feminist, she did write to encourage young women in valuing their own abilities.

The YOUNG CHURCHMAN

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Walsingham of Walsingham: A Tale of the First Crusade

BY IVY BOLTON

after she left the order, she had a successful career as an artist in New York City.

² Bolton, Ivy. "Walsingham of Walsingham: A Tale of the First Crusade," *The Young Churchman*, Vol. LXI, No. 5, March 31, 1929, pp. 67-71.

Her final book was the historical biography of the Franciscan missionary in California, Junipero Serra. This book was used as a textbook in schools in California as late as 1977.

Although the moralizing content of the stories is somewhat dated, the writing and story-telling are solid and enduring.³ Sister Mercedes retired to the Motherhouse of the community in Peekskill, New York, where she died on May 9, 1961.

An Historic Photo

The DeKoven Center archives has a large collection of photographs. Unfortunately, most of those that represent people are unidentified and unidentifiable. So when we do have the names of the people in a photo, our natural inclination is to want to know more about them. One photo that indicates the importance of Racine College in the life of the state and nation is reproduced here with brief biographies of

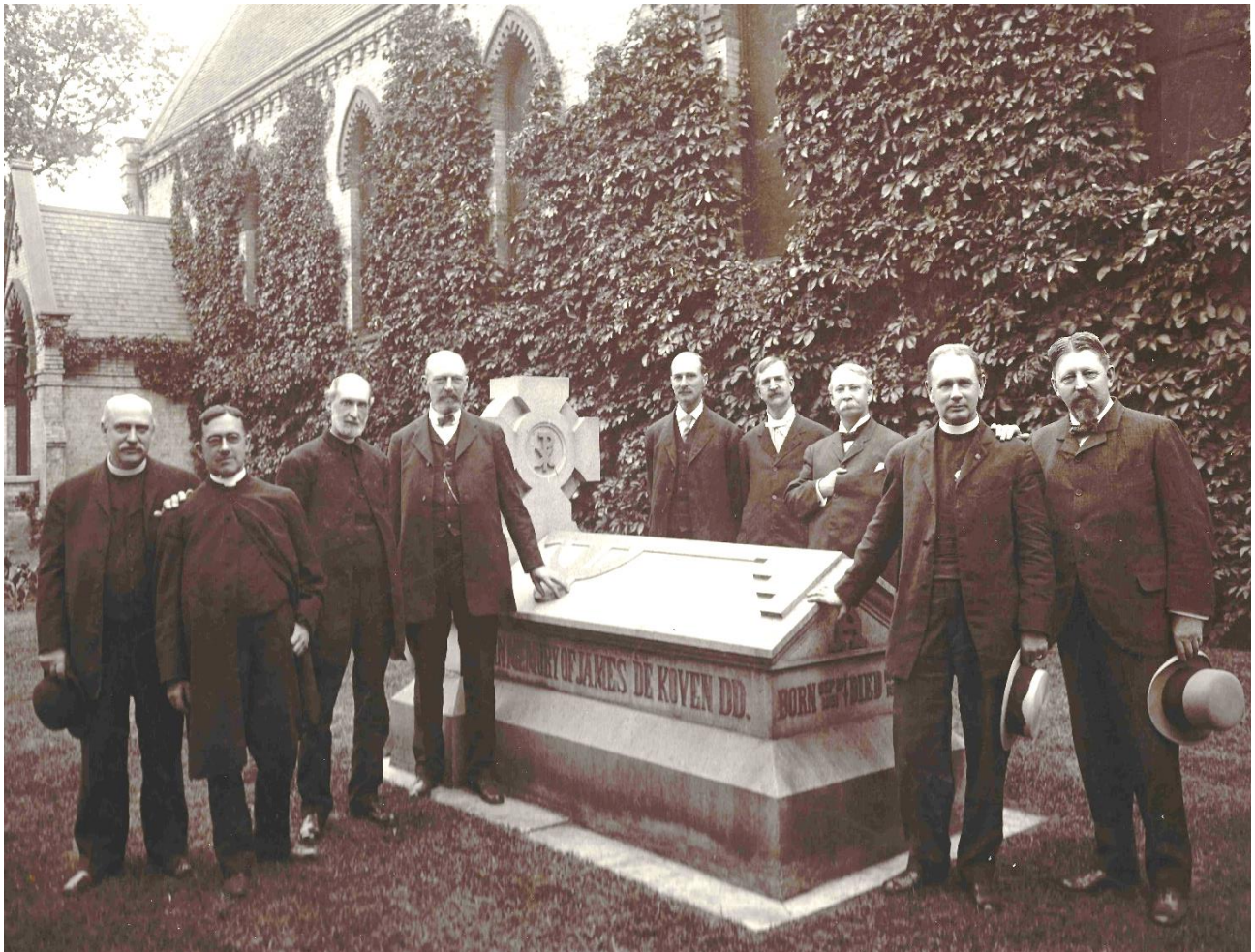


Figure 2 At the tomb of James DeKoven. Pictured, left to right.

³ Ten works written by Ivy May Bolton are available in Kindle editions: *The Young Knight*, *The Young Cavaliers*, *The King's Minstrel*, *Shadow of the Crown*, *A Loyal Foe*, *Rebels in Bondage*, *Tennessee Outpost*,

The Luck of Scotland, *Andrew of the Eagleheart*, and *Father Junipero Serra*.

the individuals shown.

The Rev. Dr. Arthur Piper (1845-1930)

A graduate of Racine College and Nashotah House, Piper served for more than a quarter century as rector of St. Luke's, Racine. For three years he served as Warden of Racine College and as College President for ten years. He also served as president of St. Luke's Hospital and chaplain at Taylor Orphanage.

The Rev. Luther Pardee (1848-1930)

Pardee served in various parishes in the Chicago area and as Dean of St. James Cathedral.

The Rev. John Coleman (1846-1920)

A graduate of General Theological Seminary, Coleman served parishes in Philadelphia, Michigan and Connecticut retiring in 1879. Eventually, he moved to England where he died in 1920.

Mr. John O. Slemmons (1847-1924)

Slemmons was one of the oldest and most widely known traveling salesmen in the jewelry business, representing J.B. Bowden & Co. when he retired in 1919.

Mr. Frank O. Osborne (1849-1931) After a successful business career in Chicago, Osborne became a prominent attorney in St. Paul, Minnesota. A graduate of Racine College and Harvard Law School, he was a trustee of Racine College for several years and was the last surviving member of his class when he died in 1931.

Mr. Alfred Sorenson (1850-1939)

Alfred Sorenson was a well-respected Omaha newspaperman and author of *The Early History of Omaha*.

Chief Justice John B. Winslow (1851-1920)

After receiving a B.A. in 1871 Winslow later joined Racine College faculty as an instructor of Greek. Graduating from the

University of Wisconsin Law School in 1875, he served as Racine city attorney for three years until being elected a circuit court judge for Racine, Kenosha and Walworth Counties. Elected to the Wisconsin Supreme Court in 1891, Winslow served for 29 years, the last 13 years as the chief justice.

The Rev. Dr. MacLean (1848-1930)

The Rev. Dr. T. W. MacLean served parishes in Minnesota and Joliet, Illinois.

Ex.-Gov. William Rush Merriam (1849-1931)

Merriam served in the Minnesota House of Representatives in 1883 and 1887 and was the Speaker of the House in 1887. He was elected as the 11th Governor of Minnesota and served from January 9, 1889 to January 4, 1893

The Death and Funeral of James DeKoven

"THE DEATH OF OUR WARDEN."⁴ This phrase of five words was the headline of the article which appeared in *The College Mercury* of Racine College on April 7, 1879. Its simplicity in many ways underlines the impact that the unexpected death of James DeKoven had on the school, its students and staff, the city of Racine, and the Episcopal Church of the United States. The opening paragraph of this article is a summation of this event and its effect:

On the morning of the 19th of March, the Rev. James DeKoven, D.D., Warden of Racine College, died of apoplexy. As the news of his sudden death spread through the College and Grammar School, the scene was affecting in the extreme. Each felt as though a revered parent was gone. Tears came to the

⁴ *The College Mercury*, Racine College, April 7, 1879, Vol. XXV, No. 2, p. 1.

eyes of many a youth, who had long since come to manly strength and stature.

The April 7th issue of the *Mercury* was the first to be published after March 19. The editors provided an overview of the life of DeKoven, the events following his death and the many tributes paid to him throughout the country.

DeKoven's health. In January of 1879, DeKoven fell on an icy sidewalk in Milwaukee and broke his ankle. The accident happened early in the morning as he walked to the station to get the first train for his return to Racine. He could not get up and went unnoticed for almost an hour. His Racine doctor, John G. Meachem, described his progress of recuperation as good and expressed no concerns about his general health. Meachem does mention DeKoven's worries about his weak heart: "His mother died of paralysis, lingering paralysis, and he had great dread of being himself the subject of the same disease."⁵

The Funeral. James DeKoven died on Wednesday the 19th and his funeral was held on Saturday the 22nd of March during a blizzard in Racine. The description of his funeral in the *Mercury* is very complete. Following the directions given by DeKoven before his death, there were three celebrations of Holy Communion on the morning of his burial at 7, 8, and 9 o'clock. A public viewing of his body occurred after the nine o'clock service. The actual funeral service took place at 11 a.m. and began with a formal procession from Taylor Hall to St. John's Chapel. This involved not only the Racine College Community but former students, visiting clergy, citizens and elected officials of Racine and Wisconsin.

⁵ "Autobiography of Dr. John Goldesbrough Meachem, Sr., 1823-1896.", Unpublished

At the conclusion of the service the procession moved from the chapel to the grave accompanied by the hymn "For all the saints who from their labors rest." The spot chosen for his tomb is on the south side of the chapel under the window nearest to his seat inside.

The description of the chapel and the burial service is quite detailed. Special attention is given to the many floral tributes that were sent to the college for the funeral. Among the different detailed descriptions is the following.

The tribute of the old students now resident in Chicago was a cross five feet high of choice white flowers. On the upper arm of the cross was a large crown of tea roses with a band of purple flowers. At the intersection of the cross were the letters I.H.S. in scarlet blossoms. The base consisted of three broad steps inscribed with purple violets with the prayer, 'Grant, O Lord, eternal rest.'⁶



Figure 3 St. John's Chapel on the morning of James DeKoven's funeral

manuscript. Wisconsin Historical Society, p. 21 of typescript (p. 101 of handwritten ms).

⁶ *The College Mercury*, April 7, 1879, p. 3.

The photo that accompanies this article was taken the morning of the funeral and shows the profusion of flowers in St. John's Chapel. Memorial services in DeKoven's honor were held in many churches around the country.

The widespread nature of the articles which began appearing on March 20, 1879, attest to DeKoven's celebrity. The contested episcopal election in Illinois in 1875 had obviously contributed to his fame. From his little college in Wisconsin he had come to be known throughout the United States.

"The Pie Story"

The following story was printed in the Racine College *Mercury* on February 15, 1917, Vol. LIX, No. 2 in a column called "ODZANENZ." The language is very descriptive and tells a delightful story of the creativity and ingenuity of young students.

The year was the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-seven. It was the daily 1 o'clock dinner. Moreover, it was "Pie Day," a fearsome and wonderful thing now to be described.

We have alluded to "tasks." These were the punishments for venal—and often for serious—infringements of the written and unwritten laws of Racine, the *Leges Racenensis*, that, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, must be obeyed. A "task" might be to write out ten, twenty, fifty or even one or more hundred lines of Greek, or Latin or even of English. Even a thousand lines in a more heinous offense would not be deemed incommensurate. The sources from which the lines were to be thus copied were mostly left to the culprit, though the

infliction sometimes prescribed such and such number of lines of Homer or of Xenophon. And this regimen—it might almost be called a jurisprudence—was so universal that it led to the institution, as one might say, of a Labor and Capital class! For a group of commercially inclined youths formed itself, whose members made a specialty of copying out long stunts of Greek, Latin and English which they "kept in stock," so to speak, or would execute to any length required on order, so that for a consideration the delinquent or culprit order to produce a "task" could have his particular penalty ready to file when demanded, and the time required to have produced it by his own labor could be devoted to any sort of congenial mischief; or he loafed . . . and the cruel professor or tutor imposing the "task" was none the wiser! And—since coin of the realm was rare (whatever there was of it was doled out by the curator from deposits for pocket money made by the parent or guardian of the student), and used for the weekly relays of boys permitted on the Monday holidays to dally with the charms of the pastry shops and confectioneries of the town of Racine, two miles to the northward, where only coin of the realm was accepted, the actual currency used in payment for these stock-tasks was **PIE**.

This "pie currency," too, was easily arranged for. The menu of the Racine College Commons was always of wholesome food and plenty of it. But on two days in each week this menu included **pie** as a dessert. So the system evolved itself that the culprit who had employed a fellow-student to write his "task" for him would simply discharge his indebtedness or

make payment on account thereof by passing to the creditor who had done the writing his (the delinquent's) portion of pie at each dinner on a "Pie Day"!

The result was, of course, that on "Pie Day" the transfers of pie from debtors to creditors became enormous and could not escape observation of the faculty. Incredible amounts—hundreds of quaternions—of pie could not well be transferred without observation. And the result was finally that by a solemn proclamation of bankruptcy all obligations of pie were declared by the faculty null and void and all payments thereafter forbidden under the direst penalties! Even the manifest one-sidedness of the decree working entirely in favor of the pie-debtors, and entirely to the pie-ruin of pie-creditors was not permitted to interfere with the sternness of the decree.

Publication Information

We hope you enjoy the stories and information provided in this second issue of "Notes." We appreciate any additions, corrections or suggestions you might have. These can be sent to the e-mail address listed below or to the DeKoven Center, Attention: Archives.

Sincerely,
John E. Magerus
Fr. Jim Braun
jmagerus@dekoventer.org

The DeKoven Center
Attn: Archives
600 Twenty-First Street
Racine, Wisconsin 53403

