

THE Empire



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR THE ALUMNI OF
ROMAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL



Welcome to the second issue of the New Empire Supplement

In an effort to provide the Roman Catholic High School Alumni community with additional news, updates, historical information, and other fun facts about the legendary high school at Broad and Vine, we are pleased to publish this second issue of the new *Empire* “newsletter” edition. We welcome feedback from Roman’s alumni community as to what they would like to see in future editions of *The Empire* newsletter.

Please send feedback to Chris Gibbons '79: gibbonscg@aol.com

Did You Know?

The story of George Adams:



George Adams graduated from Roman Catholic High School in 1899, and, is not only believed to be the first African American to graduate from Roman, but also the first to graduate from an Diocesan high school in the United States. While at Roman, Adams was an exceptional student and athlete. He excelled in four sports: football, basketball, baseball, and track. He was one of only two African American football players in the 1899 Inter-scholastic League and was selected All Inter-scholastic as a fullback in 1898. The Philadelphia Times stated that “Adams is the best sprinter in the Philadelphia Inter-scholastic A.A. holding their sprinting records of 10 2-5 seconds (100)

and 23 4-5 second (220).” In a remarkable display of athleticism, on May 27, 1899, at Franklin Field, in front of 2,000 spectators, Adams set three school records in winning the 100-yard dash, the 220-yard dash, and the shot put. He also won the Quarter Mile race that day. Following graduation in 1899, Adams then took post-graduate courses at Roman studying the German language. He later worked for the Philadelphia Post Office for 40 years and died in 1940 at the age of 62. The full story of George Adams has only recently come to light as a result of modern research technology, and when it was revealed, he was overwhelmingly voted into Roman Catholic High School’s Sports Hall of Fame in 2020.

Did You Know?

The story of Sophia Cahill:

Prior to his death in 1878, Thomas Cahill revealed his plans to build the first free All Boys Catholic High School in the country to only one person – his wife, Sophia. Although she had legal right to contest the stipulations of his Will in court for her own benefit, Sophia instead not only embraced Thomas’ dream, but stayed active in her association with the school. She was there at the formal ceremonies that were held at Broad and Vine over 130 years ago when the doors first opened in 1890, and subsequent research has also revealed that the current Sophia Cahill Award that is now awarded annually to a member of the Roman family, is actually not the first award given in her name. In the 1890s, the graduating student with the highest grade-point average received what was called the Sophia Cahill Prize, and it is believed that she personally funded the award each year. Sophia died in 1900, during Roman’s 10-year anniversary when it had already established itself and was well on its way to becoming the cornerstone high school for what would later become a huge nationwide Diocesan network of high schools. But without her drive to ensure that our school would open well after her husband’s death, and without her unyielding loyalty to her deceased husband’s grand vision, Thomas Cahill’s dream might not have ever come to fruition.

FDR letter to Alumni Association

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 1940 letter to the Alumni Association commemorating Roman's 50th anniversary just prior to U.S. entry into WW II. What FDR and the Alumni Association couldn't have known at the time was that over 110 Cahillites would eventually give their lives in that conflict.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

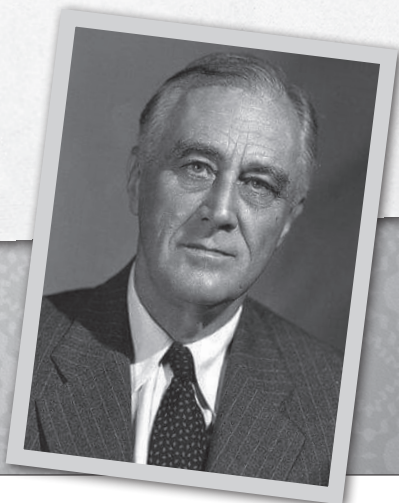
March 30, 1940

Dear Mr. Cahill:

When you gather with the members of the Alumni Association of the Roman Catholic High School of Philadelphia to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the school, please extend to all present my hearty felicitations and warmest personal greetings. I trust the celebration will be a thoroughly enjoyable one -- a real red letter event in the lives of all who attend.

Very sincerely yours,

Mr. John J. Cahill,
Chairman, Jubilee Committee,
Alumni Association,
Roman Catholic High School,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



Twenty-Five Years After by Paul Jones '15



Paul Jones, a WWI veteran and noted writer from the Class of 1915, wrote the following essay for Roman's "A Harvest of Years", a special 1940 publication commemorating Roman's 50-year anniversary.

This is the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of R.C.H.S. so that our class - 1915 - divides the past into two neat slices.

Looking back on it from this distance, 1915 seems to have been very like 1940, except that the Phillies won a pennant, a feat they have never achieved since. Jack Johnson was heavyweight champion of the world, until he met Jess Willard in April, a fact that sticks in my mind, because one lunch hour we saw him buying a cream-colored automobile in a place on Broad Street.

Everything about that time is linked in my memory with Catholic High. We learned that the Lusitania was sunk, for instance, just after we came tearing out of the lower door into Vine Street. For there was a European War going on then, just as there is now, although to people in this country it was unthinkable that the United States could ever be drawn in.

When we were working on the single issue - a Graduation Number - of the "Purple and Gold" for 1915, it certainly never occurred to Mike Zingle and me that we would meet two years later at Kelly Field in Texas where we were both stationed. Or that Walt Wiegand, another classmate, would die three years later in a tank attack on the plains between Amiens and St. Quentin. By the time we were in the war, Walt was at St. Joe's because he intended to become a Jesuit.

Before I started to write this piece, which is only in the nature of a friendly greeting, I had to take a firm grip of myself. The first prose of mine that I ever saw in print appeared in the "Purple and Gold" (I was editor-in-chief, which may explain it). Since that day I have managed to get published in newspapers and magazines all over this country and England. There was even a hopeful Dane who translated a story of mine into Danish, and had it published in Copenhagen. I have often wondered about him, and why it was he didn't follow up such a splendid (from my point of view) idea.

But now, coming back to the pages of the "Purple and Gold," I feel the old diffidence, the old doubt. After all, this is the school magazine. It will be read by the rector and the faculty, and it is, or was, impossible to turn out much worth reading by those august beings.

In short, I feel a bad case of stage fright coming on, and so withdraw with what grace I can manage, leaving you with only the best wishes of the class of 1915. Judging by the excellence of the last few issues that I have seen, the "Purple and Gold" doesn't need our recommendation, but for what it is worth, you have it.



Pro Quorum Memoria is Latin for "In Their Honor." Each newsletter issue will feature those members of the Roman family - two living and two deceased - who have been selected by the Archives Research Committee for recognition as a result of distinguishing themselves in their career, or in certain endeavors of their life, or who have selflessly given their time, or volunteered their efforts to such an extent that their accomplishments and notoriety reflects positively upon Roman Catholic High School.

Felix A. Murphy 1896



Dr. Felix A. Murphy was born in Ireland and was brought to this country by his parents when he was a child. He hailed from Our Lady of Mt. Carmel parish and graduated from Catholic High in 1896. Following graduation he attended Jefferson Medical College, and became a physician.

Murphy enlisted in the Army at the outbreak of World War I and served as a First Lieutenant in the Medical Corps of the 154th Depot Brigade. After the war, Murphy became a prominent physician at St. Joseph's Hospital in Doylestown. On February 4th, 1926, while performing a risky operation on a woman with scarlet fever, Murphy accidentally cut his hand and contracted septic poisoning. In what became a front-page story in the Philadelphia newspapers, and was also covered in newspapers across the country, Murphy was hailed as a martyr. As chronicled in the Philadelphia Inquirer, Murphy "diagnosed his own case two hours after the operation when he saw the hand was infected and predicted his own death. The physician arranged his affairs and put his 'house in order'... submitting himself to an ordeal which he announced would result in his own death." All known medical measures were brought to bear, and Murphy even directed the amputation of his own arm, but to no avail. Dr. Felix Murphy died on February 10, 1926.

John W. Friel 1910



John Whiting Friel graduated from Roman Catholic High School in 1910. Following graduation, he attended the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School - Class of 1915. During World War I's great Battle of the Meuse-Argonne, on Nov. 2, 1918, Friel and two

fellow soldiers swam across the Escaut/Scheldt River to complete the construction of a crucial footbridge. The other two soldiers with Friel were killed during the action. Friel was wounded, but still made it to the other side and completed the footbridge which enabled American troops to cross the river during the battle. For his actions, Friel was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the Silver Star, the Croix de Guerre with two palms from France, the Croix de Guerre from Belgium, and the Purple Heart. Following the war, Friel worked for the Standard Press Steel Company for 42 years, retiring as Executive Vice President. In 1963, Friel was named National Commander of the Legion of Valor, an organization that dates back to the Civil War for military personnel who have been awarded either the Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, or the Navy Cross. Friel was honored in a White House ceremony in 1963 by President Lyndon Johnson. Friel died in 1970, and his legacy was so revered that his obituary was published in the New York Times.

David Yarborough



Dave Yarborough is a graduate of Bishop Neumann High School and served in the U.S. Air Force for four years. He earned his degree in Social Studies at Temple University and after initial teaching positions in the Philadelphia Public school system and Bishop McDevitt High

School, Dave arrived at RCHS in the Fall of 1987, where he would spend the next 25 years. During his tenure at Catholic High, Dave was revered by the students and the faculty. He consistently stimulated insightful conversations among his peers and created a class environment in which students would creatively learn the lessons of history. Fellow faculty member and good friend, Joe Sinclair, recalls, "Almost all of our conversations centered on teaching and our students... It was always about the kids." As a devout Christian man, Dave always stressed the importance of both aspects of the Roman motto "Fides et Scientia" (Faith and Knowledge). At Roman, students have the opportunity to learn about their Faith and its importance in their life, and, while Thomas Cahill left his fortune to establish Roman Catholic High School, in his teaching career, Mr. Dave Yarborough has left a legacy of excellence, passion, commitment, and love. The students he taught and the school he served are much better because of him.

Charles "Chuck" Taylor 2012



Charles "Chuck" Taylor graduated from Roman in 2012, hailing from St. Bridget's parish, and is the epitome of a true Cahillite. While a student at Roman, he was active as a member of the Cross Country team, Student Council, National Honor Society, Community Service Corps,

Ambassadors, SADD, AOH, Yearbook, Ministry Team, ASSIST and was the founding member of the Roman Reserves club. Following graduation from Roman, Chuck earned his Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Criminal Justice from La Salle University. Still extremely active at Roman as an alumnus, Chuck serves on the Executive Committee, the Board of Trustees, and on the Membership Affairs and Nominating Committees. He was also the principal author the Board of Trustees "Trustee Manual" and served as the Chairman of both the Day at the Bay and the Friends of River Field Committees. Chuck is also a member of the Homecoming Committee, was elected governor of the Cahill Club and the Moderator of the Jr. AOH organization at Roman. Chuck also helps the current Roman students as a member of the Patrick Kerr '05 Memorial Scholarship Fund Committee and was a founding member of the Shane Montgomery '13 Memorial Scholarship Fund. Chuck currently works as a Senior Associate at PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP.

If you know a member of the Roman family that should be considered for Pro Quorum Memoria selection by the Archives Research Committee, please send an email to Chris Gibbons at gibbonscg@aol.com, or send a letter to the Alumni Office - Attn: Renee Brayboy. Please include a short biography of the nominee with the reasons why you think that they meet the above criteria and should be considered for selection by the committee. Those selected will have their biographies and photos presented in a display case in the school cafeteria, as well as published in *The Empire* newsletter, the school's alumni website, and other RCHS social media platforms.



Roman Catholic High School
301 N. Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Events and News from the Board of Trustees and Advancement Office

Sports Hall of Fame

The induction ceremony and banquet is currently scheduled for Thursday, September 16, 2021 for the 2020 SHOF inductees, and SHOF is targeting an April 2022 date (TBD) for the 2021 SHOF inductees. We will keep the Roman community informed once all dates are finalized.

Day at the Bay

Saturday, August 14. Anticipating a great turnout as we resume in-person gatherings! Please remember that it is now the second Saturday in August, and at a new location – North Wildwood’s Seaport Pier.

Day of Giving

It was another record-breaking day! On May 18th we surpassed our goals of \$100,000 and 750 donors, by raising over \$123,000 from 760 donors! Many thanks to all who donated!

Roman Run

Expected to take place in November 2021. Exact date TBD – stay tuned!

Alumni Memorial Mass & Homecoming

Sunday, October 24. Mark your calendars now as we resume our greatest tradition by gathering in-person at Catholic High!

Board of Trustees Nominations

If you would like to become an alumni trustee, or know of someone that would, please contact the Mission Advancement Office, 215-627-5487 ext.203 or Mike Pelone '77, mjpelone@yahoo.com and Joe Mangano '84, JosephMangano@msn.com

Archives Research Committee (ARC) and Veterans Affairs

The ARC announced the winners of the 2nd Annual Bill Laux Essay Contest:
1. Luis Hermoso '21, 2. Jordan D'Alonzo '21, 3. Tyree Petteway '21, 4. Connor O'Brien '21, 5. Timothy Skalski '21. Congratulations to the winners and to all of the students who participated! The Veterans Affairs Committee reports that five more RCHS alumni names were added to the WWI Memorial Plaque in March, bringing the total to 19 names found thus far out of 34. The search continues.

Roman Business Initiative

Last year due to the pandemic's adverse effect on small businesses, we created a listing of businesses owned by Roman alumni. The end of the pandemic is in sight but Roman wants to continue to promote and grow the business listing. Visit RomanCatholicHS.com/Biz to view entire listing. Want to add your business? Visit RomanCatholicHS.com/AddBiz to join the listing.

EITC/OSTC

If you owe at least \$1,000 or more in Pennsylvania state taxes you are eligible for the EITC/OSTC tax credit program which allows participants to redirect their PA state taxes to Roman as financial aid for students. In doing so, the participant receives a 90% tax credit. It is a simple program and truly a win-win! For more information and to get started contact Adam Gault '08, AGault@RomanCatholicHS.com, 215-627-5487 ext. 203.

1890 Society

The 1890 Society (formally known as the Fides et Scientia Society) was formed to encourage and acknowledge individuals who have designated Roman in their Will and estate planning. The fact is, that every individual, no matter their financial status, can allocate monies to Roman through participation in planned giving. Any alumni, family or friend of the school who has listed Roman Catholic HS in their wills through bequests, charitable gifts, gift annuities, or other planned gift opportunities, becomes a member of the 1890 Society. As Thomas Cahill showed, such a gift to Roman can make a lasting difference, not only for the next generation, but for many future generations.

Consider taking steps now to be a good steward of the resources you intend to leave behind in your Will. Remember, Roman needs your help now and in the future. To discuss options and opportunities, please contact Nicholas Pytel '97, Executive Director of Mission Advancement at NPytel@RomanCatholicHS.com, 215-627-5487 ext. 204.

Congratulations to the Roman Catholic High School Class of 2021!

The Class of 2021 held their Baccalaureate Mass and Graduation Ceremonies at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul on Friday, June 11, 2021. The Board of Trustees extends congratulations to the Class of 2021 and a hearty welcome to the greatest Alumni Association in the world!

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