

# EXCERPTS

## from the ARCHIVES

Nicholas Kemper '06

Sometime in 1840, a Jesuit in Cincinnati sat down with a newly purchased register book and opened it to the first blank page. With a steady hand, he carefully began to write:

A.M.D.G.

Alumnorum Album

Regulae

Quibus Alumni Collegii

Sti. Francisci Xaverii

diriguntur

These few words, written in beautiful Latin script, roughly translate to:

For the Greater Glory of God

A List of Students

and the Rules by Which

the Students of St. Francis Xavier College

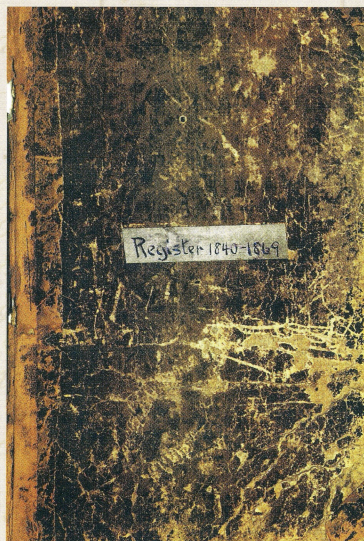
are Being Directed

This seemingly innocuous statement is the beginning of what is arguably the most important historical document among the many documents and items contained within the St. Xavier High School Archives: the 1840-1869 St. Xavier Register.

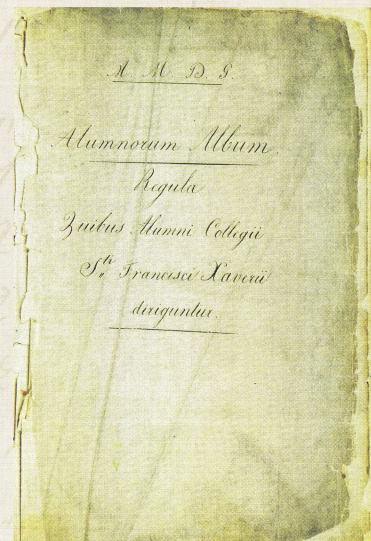
After arriving from St. Louis in 1840 at the invitation of Bishop John Baptist Purcell, a handful of Jesuits took over a struggling diocesan school (the Athenaeum, founded 1831) and renamed it St. Xavier College. The opening pages of the Register were most likely penned shortly after the Jesuits' arrival in early October of that year, making it one of the school's earliest institutional documents.

The first portion of this seminal book contains the various regulations implemented by the Jesuits in the mid-19th century: required clothing (frock coat and pantaloons), expectations of cleanliness (no spitting on the floor or throwing quills), lavatory etiquette (strict silence in the privy), and prohibitions regarding student behavior (no Grogshop visits).

The second portion of the book details the registration information of every single student who enrolled at St.



Original register cover

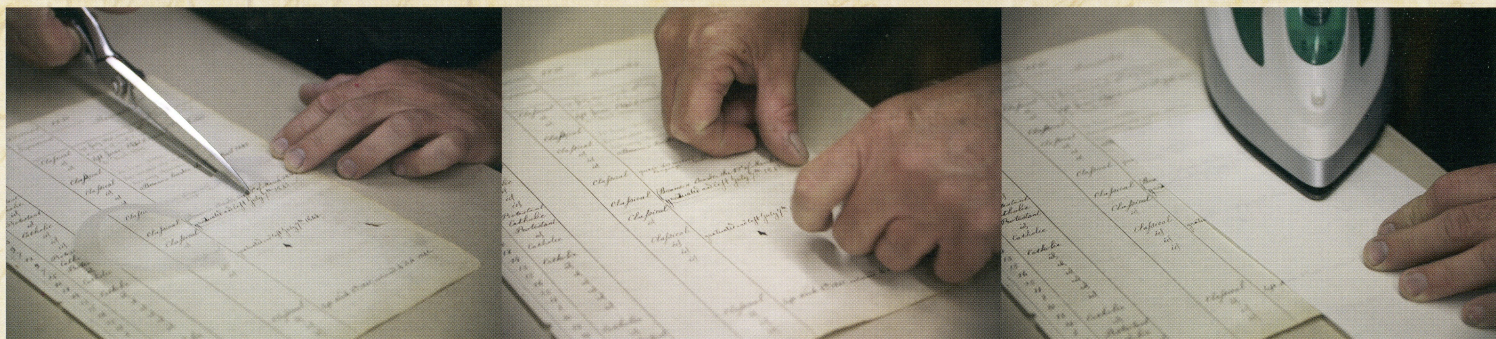


First page of register

Xavier between 1840 and 1869. The data provided for each student includes: first name, surname, parent/guardian, place of residence, date of entrance, age, religion, and status as a boarder or day scholar. A cursory glance reveals that most of the students ranged in age from six to eighteen; a few came from as far away as Cuba and Mexico; some attended for a few years, while others stayed for only a few days; and a diverse array of Catholics, Protestants, and Jews comprised the student body.

Over one hundred and eighty years have passed since the Register's first page was written, and in a reappraisal last winter it was discovered that time had not been kind. The book's binding had disintegrated almost to the point of non-existence, leaving quite a few pages loose and no longer attached to one another. The pages themselves had become acidic, brittle, and prone to crumbling. And although the ink was still crisp and legible, the Register's overall condition prevented it from being handled except in extraordinary situations. Something had to be done to preserve this invaluable piece of St. Xavier history.





If anyone could save the Register, it was Jim and Mike Fallon of the Ohio Book Store. These two expert craftsmen, who ply their bookbinding craft in the basement of this iconic Cincinnati establishment, work diligently to rescue and preserve centuries-old books, manuscripts, and family Bibles.

Unfortunately, since much of the Register's binding no longer existed, nothing short of a complete conservation overhaul would do. But that came with a hefty price tag — almost \$8,000.

However, thanks in part to a federal Institute of Museum and Library Services LSTA grant awarded by the State Library of Ohio, as well as generous contributions from alumni, the restoration was able to commence during the summer of 2021.

Up first was separating the various sections of pages, or "signatures." Each signature is bound together with string, with 30-40 signatures comprising the entire Register. Using a sharp bookbinder's knife, Jim carefully sliced through the old glue and tattered thread holding the sections together. Countless hours later, all the signatures were separated, and soon the individual pages themselves were removed one by one.

The next step was mending any lacerations in the pages. Jim painstakingly repaired all of the tears using a German-made, acid-free mending tissue that he applied gently with an iron. With the tissue firmly in place, the tears would be prevented from worsening further.

The individual pages were then sent to a local paper conservator with whom the Fallon brothers work closely. The conservator proceeded to apply a deacidification spray to each side of every page. The magnesium oxide contained within the spray creates an alkaline buffer

and helps to neutralize any harmful acidic buildup within the paper's cellulose fibers, thus helping to preserve the pages for many years to come. Each page was then encapsulated in archival-quality polyester sleeves for added protection.

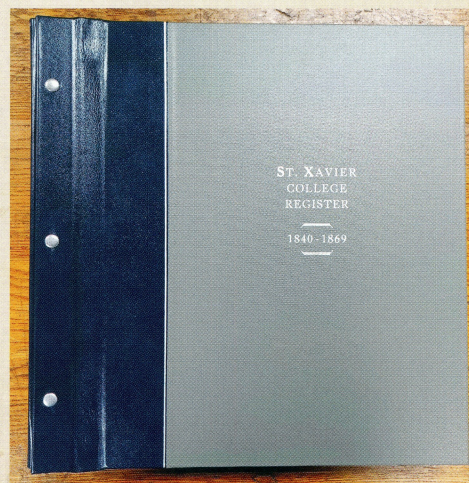
Back at the Ohio Book Store, Jim rebound all of the encapsulated pages and created handsome leather covers. The final act in this marvelous and fascinating production was the stamping of the cover and spine with **St. Xavier College Register 1840-1869** using silver foil.

The Register has since returned to its home in the St. Xavier High School Archives. Thanks to the Fallon brothers and the Ohio Book Store, the Register can now be handled and read without fear of further damage and deterioration. And better yet, this priceless historical document is now preserved and protected for future generations.

If you are interested in viewing this magnificent piece of Cincinnati and St. Xavier history, whether for genealogical research or out of plain curiosity, please contact archivist Nick Kemper at [nkemper@stxavier.org](mailto:nkemper@stxavier.org) to arrange for a visit.



Stamping of cover



Newly conserved register