

College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University

DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU

Archives History Lessons

Archives

2013

Commercial School at St. John's: The Case for the Liberal Arts

Peggy L. Roske

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University, proske@csbsju.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/archives_history_lessons

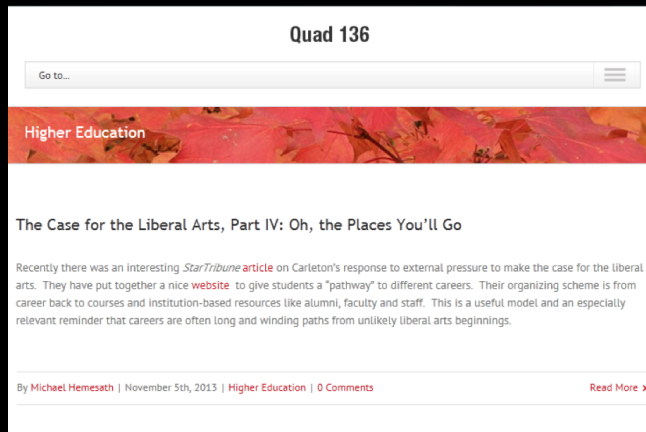
Recommended Citation

Roske, Peggy L., "Commercial School at St. John's: The Case for the Liberal Arts" (2013). *Archives History Lessons*. 19.

https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/archives_history_lessons/19

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Archives History Lessons by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csbsju.edu.

The Case for the Liberal Arts at St. John's: The "Commercial School," 1867-1922



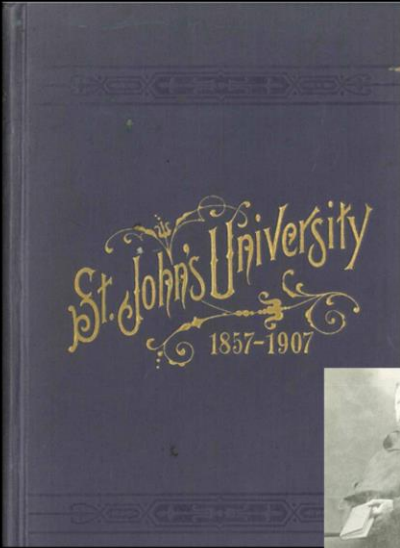
"A residential, liberal arts experience will remain the best possible undergraduate education for the foreseeable future."

Michael Hemesath, *Quad 136* blog, Dec. 9, 2013

<http://blogs.csbsju.edu/mhemesath/category/highered/page/3/>

<http://blogs.csbsju.edu/mhemesath/2013/12/09/more-realism-about-moocs-and-the-transformation-of-higher-education/>

"From the range and variety of branches taught, it is evident the College from the first sought to meet the needs of the people in whose midst it was built. There was:



- a preparatory course for the young man who was satisfied to "plough his patrimonial fields,"
- a book-keeping class for the youth preparing for commercial pursuits, [and]
- a classical course for aspirants to the learned professions."

Hoffmann, Chapter 2, p. 21

Some familiar surnames among these early "Commercial School" students:

Edelbrock	Cotter
Broker	Hemmisch
Muggli	Schleper
Tenvoorde	Walz

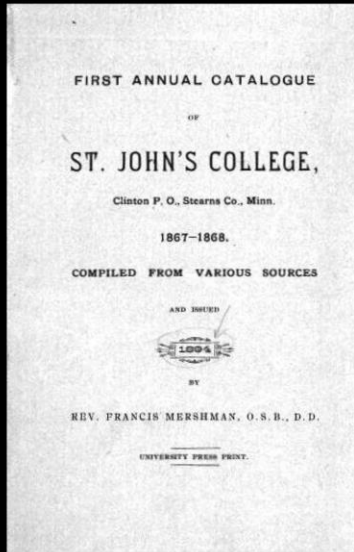


Alexius Hoffmann, OSB, chronicler and author of *St. John's University, 1857-1907, Collegeville, Minnesota: A Sketch of Its History*.

Hoffmann, Alexius, OSB. [1863-1940], [*Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota: A Sketch of Its History, 1857-1907*](#). Collegeville, Minn.: Record Press, 1907.

<http://www.csbsju.edu/SJU->

[Archives/SJUHistory/BooksaboutStJohns/HoffmannBook.htm](http://www.csbsju.edu/SJU-Archives/SJUHistory/BooksaboutStJohns/HoffmannBook.htm)



In 1869 the first *Catalogue* was published.

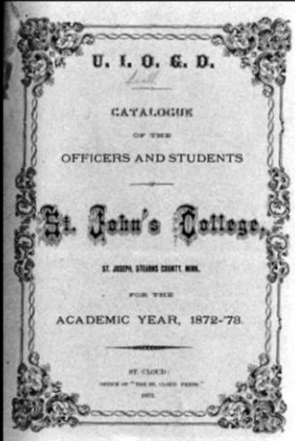
"The 'Course of Studies' ...comprised three divisions:

- the Elementary School,
- the Classical Course, and
- the Theological Course....

For students who did not intend to prepare for the ministry there was a class in Bookkeeping."

Hoffmann, Chapter 2, p. 33-34

Cover of St. John's *Catalogue*, 1867-1868.



COURSE OF STUDIES.

The course of study pursued within the College has been modified according to the progressive standard of education recognized in the republic of letters all the world over. There are three distinct courses of studies established in the Institution—the ecclesiastical, the classical and commercial, besides an elementary school for beginners.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

This School affords to children, especially those of German descent, an excellent opportunity of acquiring a thorough knowledge of the elementary principles of the English and German languages. It embraces Religious Instruction, Spelling, Reading, Penmanship, Arithmetic and Geography.

COMMERCIAL COURSE.

This course embraces Religious Instruction, the English, German and French Languages, English Grammar, Exercises, Elocution, Composition, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Mathematics, Bookkeeping, Pen-

manship, Geography, History, Natural Philosophy and Chemistry. It is completed in three years.

CLASSICAL COURSE.

1872-73 Catalog, p. 4-5

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/333>
1872-73 Catalog, p. 4-5

The first graduates with a Master of Accounts degree from the commercial school:

SIXTH ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT.

JUNE 26th, 1873.

The Diploma of "Master of Accounts" was conferred on the following graduates in the Commercial Department:

FRANK SCHLICK	.....St. Paul,	Minn.
WILLIAM HAMM,"	"
J. J. BYRNES,	.....Faribault,	"
PETER FEHN,	.....St. Michael,	"
THOS. YOUNG,	.....Arlington,	"
ADAM STEFFES,	.....Old Mission,	Iowa.
WM. EVERSMAAN,	.....St. Augusta,	Minn.
FRANCIS COTTER,	.....Winona,	"

1872-73 Catalog, p. 8.

Hoffmann, Chapter 2, p. 42

Image from 1872-73 Catalog, p. 8

1873-74 Catalog

5

SCIENTIFIC COURSE.

This course embraces the English, German, French, Arithmetic, Drawing, Letter-writing, Geometry, Algebra, Composition, American and English Literature, Trigonometry, Mensuration and the subjects usually comprised in the physical and natural sciences.

COMMERCIAL COURSE.

Besides religious instruction, this course embraces the English, German and French languages, English Grammar, Exercises, Elocution, Composition, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Mathematics, Book-keeping, Penmanship, Geography, History. It is completed in three years.

TELEGRAPHY.

This branch will call the special attention of the students of the Commercial course. Telegraph apparatus are already purchased and placed in competent hands. A student wishing to become a successful *operator* will be taught the theory and practice of telegraphy and all the duties of a telegraphist for *forty dollars*.

CLASSICAL COURSE.

This course comprises five regular classes, each occupying a

COMMERCIAL COURSE.

Besides religious instruction, this course embraces the English, German and French languages, English Grammar, Exercises, Elocution, Composition, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Mathematics, Book-keeping, Penmanship, Geography, History. It is completed in three years.

Same description as in 1872-73 but minus two courses:
Natural Philosophy and Chemistry.

1873-74 Catalog, p. 5

1877-78

In addition to the courses already offered at the institution, it was deemed expedient to organize a distinct Commercial course. Many young men in the northern section of the state contemplated embracing a business career, but there was no business college conveniently at hand. Hence the authorities concluded to meet the demand by adding this course to the curriculum

According to the prospectus issued in December 1877, students of this course were also permitted to attend certain classes in the literary and scientific departments. All the studies which contribute to make up a thorough accountant, were to be taught.

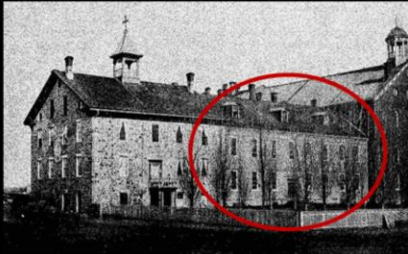
The time required for finishing the course was to depend entirely upon the student's endowments and progress; he might finish it in three months, if his preparatory studies were good. By paying the tuition fee of fifty dollars a scholarship could be procured, which entitled the holder to an unlimited attendance in the classes of the department. Students were to be admitted at any time of the year, and no vacation given to interrupt studies.

Hoffmann, Chapter 3,
p. 55-56

Hoffmann, Chapter 3, p. 55-56

The department occupied the south half of the first floor in the first brick building—now the tailor's shop. The students of this course attended instructions in this hall daily from 8 a. m. till 3 p. m. but spent the remaining hours in the general study rooms. The late P. Norbert Hofbauer, a skilled accountant and excellent penman, was the first Principal of the department, which was opened after the Christmas holidays, early in January 1878.

Hoffmann, Chapter 3, p. 56



Text from Hoffmann, Chapter 3, p. 56

Early photo from *Scriptorium*, v. 14, no. 1, p. 20; later photo from SJU Archives.

Besides, the above named, St. John's Commercial College presents another weighty inducement. Many desire to perfect some cognate studies while pursuing the commercial course; this they can do at St. John's. In the Classical College, which is in the same building, instructions are given in Penmanship, Commercial Arithmetic and English Belles Lettres, before and after the hours of study in the Commercial College; thus giving the pupils an opportunity to attend these instructions, without interfering with their other commercial studies.

The Trustees, satisfied that the facilities they offer are unsurpassed, respectfully invite business men and those intending to commence a business career, to consider the opportunities which St. John's Commercial College presents; they purpose to prepare competent business men as quickly, and as cheaply as it can be done.

TERMS:

Tuition for the Commercial course above specified, payable in advance.....	\$50 00
Telegraphy, full course.....	40 00
Text and Blank Books, obtainable at the College.....	10 00
Board at the College, per week.....	3 00
Bedding and washing, per month.....	1 50
Extra studies.—Terms arranged with the President.	
Instruments and chemicals for Telegraphy, free.	

1878-79 Catalogue, p. 4

1878-79 Catalog, p. 4.

A class in practical short-hand reporting was organized by Fr. Urban, who himself was an expert reporter, and the first impulse was given to the introduction of phonography into the commercial class.

1881-82

Hoffmann, Chapter 3, p. 65



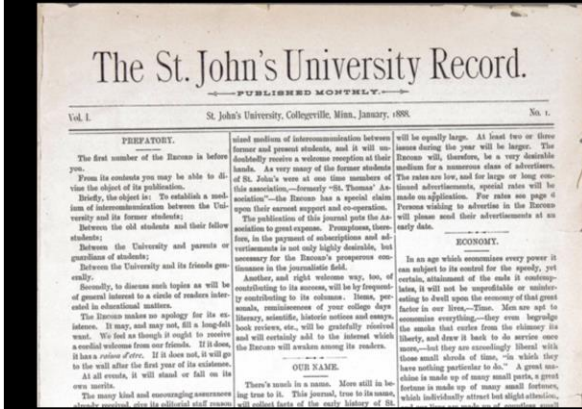
1882
Commercial
Students

Photo in the SJU Archives: PC07.0340 Box 11 n. 15 1882 Commercial Students
Phonography was a system of shorthand stenography developed by Isaac Pitman.

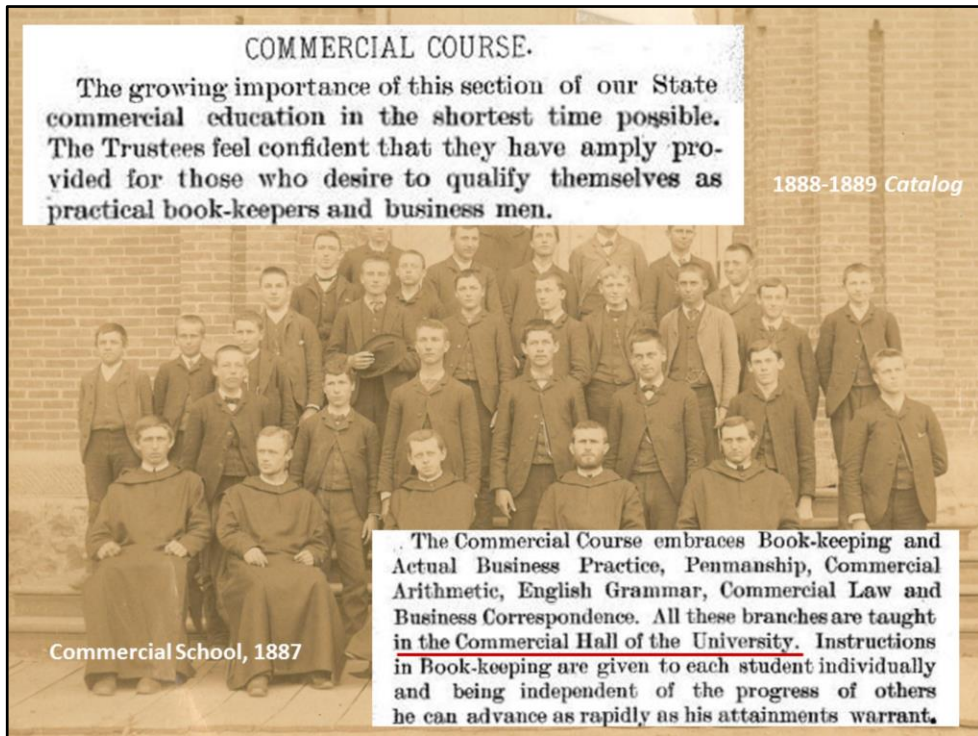
1887-1888

Early in December two Remington typewriting machines were installed for the benefit of commercial students and thus the foundation was laid for cultivating a branch of study much in demand. At first the instruments were not much patronized, but with the growing popularity of phonography the number of applicants for instruction on the typewriter also grew.

Hoffmann, Chapter 3, p 85



The Record begins publication in January 1888



Text from 1888-89 *Catalog*, p. 8-9

Photo in the SJU Archives: PC06.0008 and PC07.0308 1887 Commercial School

He must successfully pass an examination in each set before he can advance to the next one. An opportunity for examination is offered every week. In Commercial Arithmetic, Commercial Law, English Grammar and Business Correspondence the pupil must pass but one examination, which he can do whenever he considers himself competent, provided he has completed his course of Book-keeping. All examinations must be made in writing. The grade required is 80 per cent. Each student, after completing the Commercial Course and passing all the required examinations in a satisfactory manner, is awarded the Diploma of Accounts.

1888-1889 Catalog

TERMS.

Cash for five months in advance is strictly demanded. The University is not endowed; it is entirely dependent for its support on the fees paid for board, tuition, etc., which are as follows:

IN CLASSICAL OR COMMERCIAL COURSE.

TUITION, INCLUDING BOARD, BEDDING,
WASHING AND MENDING OF LINENS,
per session of five months, \$100.00

OPTIONAL STUDIES.

INSTRUCTION ON THE PIANO AND USE OF INSTRUMENT, per session of five months, \$20.00

INSTRUCTION ON ANY OTHER MUSICAL INSTRUMENT, per session of five months, 15.00

USE OF PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL APPARATUS, per session of five months, 10.00

DRAWING AND PAINTING, per session of five months, 10.00

PHONOGRAPHY OR TYPEWRITING, per session of five months, 10.00

PHONOGRAPHY, per session of five months, 20.00

EXAMINATION, if spent at University, 33.00

DAY SCHOLARS, per month, 3.00

1899 Commercial Graduates



No Diploma, however, is awarded to students whose conduct is not exemplary.

1888-1889 Catalog, p. 9; p. 15 - Terms

Photo in the SJU Archives: PC07.0312 Box 10 n. 10 1899 Commercial Graduates edited

COLLEGE OF Saint Benedict Saint John's UNIVERSITY

Home A-Z Index Tools Directory Give to CSB Give to SJU

Admission About Us Student Life Academics Newsroom & Sports Alumni& Arts & Culture

Saint John's University Archives

Home / Saint John's University Archives / SJU History / Students 1857-1915

Students 1857-1915

This is the most definitive listing known of the early students at St. John's (College, Seminary, Preparatory School, and University - between which distinctions are not made on this list). It may have been compiled largely by consulting lists that were regularly published in the Catalogs and The Record.

An attempt has been made to correct obvious errors, but please email the Archivist concerning any that may remain.

NOTE: International students are in red

A TRNSCR number in the first column indicates that the SJU Archives has a transcript for this student.

For a list of early students at the College of Saint Benedict, click here.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W Y Z

	BRAUN, FRANK (FR. MARK)	COLLEGEVILLE, MINN	1907-
T-33	BRAUN, JOHN	BELLE RIVER, MINN	1883-1884
T-361	BRAUN, WILLIAM M.	WAHPETON, N. DAK	1899-1902
T-452	BRAY, EUCLID	CROOKSTON, MINN	1904-1905
	BRAY, JOHN	MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA	1874-1878
	BRAZNOVICH, JAMES	EVELETH, MINN	1904-1905
	BREEN, THOMAS M.		1877-1878
T-405	BREGEL, JOHN	GIBBON, MINN	1901-1902

<http://www.csbsju.edu/SJU-Archives/SJUHistory/SJUStudents1857to1915.htm>

Name	Parent	Place of residence	State	Arr. Date
Braun William	Mrs. Frank	Wahpeton	N. Dak.	Sept. 5

1900 & 1901 Register of Students:

Name: Braun, William
Parent or guardian: Mrs. Frank Braun
Place of residence: Wahpeton, N. Dak.
Arrival date: Sept. 5

1901: Departure date: March 26

Departure date			
N. Dak.	Sept. 5	Mar. 26	

Braun, Wm Register 1891-1906 p. 128 and 142

Entries in the Vice President's Student Register 1899-1902

Entry for 1900-1901

✓ 50	Braun Wm M.	Wahpeton N. Dak	Sept. 5
2	born Aug. 31. 1884, Wahpeton		
	Mother - Mrs. F. Braun		

Entry for 1901-1902

✓ 32	Braun Wm M.	Wahpeton N. Dak.	Sept. 5 1901	May 26 02
	born Aug. 31. 1884, Wahpeton N. Dak			M.A.
	Mother - Mrs. F. Braun			

Braun, Wm VP Student Register 1899-1902 , p. 45 – for 1900-1901

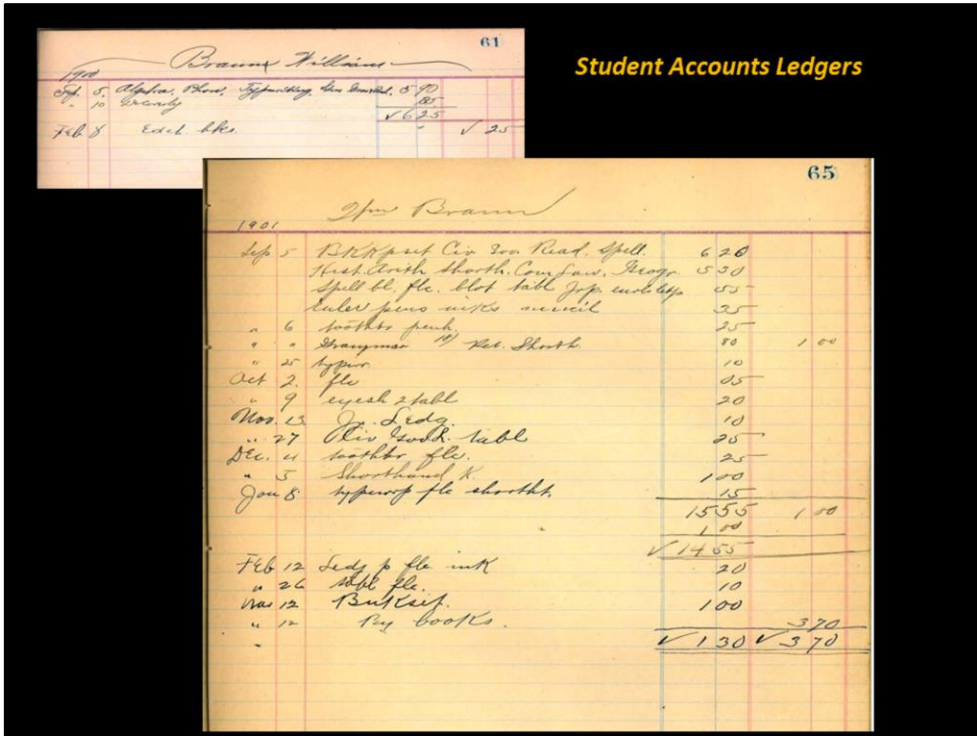
Braun, Wm VP Student Register 1899-1902 , p. 84 – for 1901-1902; M.A. indicates Master of Accounts Degree.

Ledger
1899-1902

William Braun

1899					
Jan 25	To Hair	80 -	Jan 20	By Cash	17 90
" "	" Medicine	1 -	" 21	" C.B.	100 -
" "	" Books & Stationery	8 90			
" "	" Board & Drift	98 -			
		<u>117 90</u>			<u>117 90</u>
1900			1901		
Sept 6	To B. & T.	90 -	Feb 14	By C.B.	96 25
Feb 1	" Board & Drift	6 25	May 31	" Books & Stationery	25 -
" 1	" B. & T.	90 -	June 30	" C.B.	80
May 29	" Hair	17 50			107 25
		<u>203 75</u>			<u>203 75</u>
1902					
Jan 24	To B. & T.	90 -		Deduct B. & Drift	5 -
" 24	" Tupper	8 -	Feb 7	By C.B.	104
" 24	" Medicine	25	Mar 26	" Books	3 70
Jan 26	" B. & T.	14 55	Apr 26	" C.B.	112
Mar 26	" Tupper	2 15	" 8	"	2 -
April	" Board & Drift	26 30			<u>150 95</u>

Braun, Wm Ledger 1899-1902 p 76. "By C.B." = "By Cash Balance."



Braun, Wm Student Accounts 1900-1901
 Braun, Wm Student Accounts 1901-1902

1908 Commercial Football Team



needs only a good deal of practice to fall in line again. The captains lined up their teams in the following order: Bankers: Knaeble, c.; Clewell, 1b.; Cauley, 2b.; Mathey, 3b.; Bettendorf, s.s.; Kelly, l.f.; J. O'Shaughnessy, c.f.; B. O'Shaughnessy, r.f.; O'Leary, p. Classics: Cismowski, c. Geo. Rauch, 1b.; Delaney, 2b. O'Sullivan, 3b.; Houska, s.s.; Hartnett, l.f.; Hinnekamp, c.f. Wiechmann, r.f.; Loenikar, p. Umpire, Leo Schroeder.

BANKERS	2	0	3	4	0	2	0	x-14
CLASSICS	2	1	2	0	0	0	3	0-10

Encouraged by their success the Bankers went out to try it over and—lost. Umpire, Bern. O'Shaughnessy.

CLASSICS	10	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	x-20
BANKERS	2	0	4	1	0	0	1	3	0-11

Both teams are developing good material and it may be expected that they will keep quite an even tally with work that need not be ashamed to face good amateur teams.

Following in line with the baseball spirit the Juniors and young Seniors are keeping the breezes supplied with yells of their coaches, ever since they have succeeded in drawing up two well matched nines. Two interesting games were played on the old diamonds in the morning and afternoon of April 21st; after that, the unsettled conditions of the diamonds kept the players out of the field. The two nines called themselves after their captains:

"Sausens": Tembrell c.; Mienies, p.; Van der Horst, s.s.; Hansen J. 1b., Nusang, 2b.; Sausen, 3b.; Braun, l.f.; Himmel C. c.f.; Shea, r.f.—"Nowaks": Steichen, c.; Rauch J. p.; Nowak, s.s.; Mooney, 1b.; Henle, 2b.; Lunzer, 3b.; O'Reilly, l.f.; Richter, c.f.; Berrisford J. r.f.

Score I:	"SAUSENS"	0	0	1	0	1	3	0	2	x-7
	"NOWAKS"	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0-1
Score II:	"NOWAKS"	4	2	1	2	1	1	4	4	x-19
	"SAUSENS"	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	4	2-10

Umpire, Rev. Louis.

Good start, keep the ball a'rolling, boys!

Photo in the SJU Archives: PC03.0032 102/1: 1-032 1908 Commercial Football Team
The Record 1900 April p.158 baseball

The Record Sept. 1900

280 THE RECORD.

HONORABLE MENTION.

The following students deserve honorable mention for good conduct up to September 25.

Henry Asbre	Alex Heule	Frank Fiemel
Frank Bangart	Math. Heuring	Louis Posch
Ed. Bartl	Fred. Hinnenkamp	Alfred Preiss
Ed. Bast	Bern. Hoeschen	Andrew Preiss
Ed. Bazal	Edw. Holmes	Jac. Rauch
Arnold Bock	Chas. Houska	John Reifenrath
A. Bragemann	Edw. Hyland	Joseph Reifenrath
Wm Braun	Jos. Janousek	John Richter
Joseph Berto	Roy Jones	Albert Ritt
Dom. Bretto	Henry Kanetzki	Joseph Roerig
Ernest Brotherton	Jos. Ketten	Jos Ronellenitsch
Wm. Buerfening	Wm. Klinkhammer	Chas. Sartell
Wm. Bueshmeier	Joseph Knaeble	Joseph Sauer
John Callahan	John Koestel	Henry Sausen
Ray Clark	Henry Kneiss	Henry Schaefer

(Braun made the list every month)

Locals.

— Mr. Anthony Eimer was invested as lay-brother, Oct. 27. His name in religion is Br. Willibald.

— Rev. Augustine, O.S.B., celebrated his sacerdotal silver jubilee at Moorhead, Minn., Oct. 21. Ad multos annos!

— Sixty members were admitted to the Ecclesialty B. V. M. by the Rev. Director P. Bernard, O.S.B., on Recovery Sunday.

— Fr. Bede, O. S. B., who was at the hospital in St. Cloud for some time has returned. He is on the way to recovery.

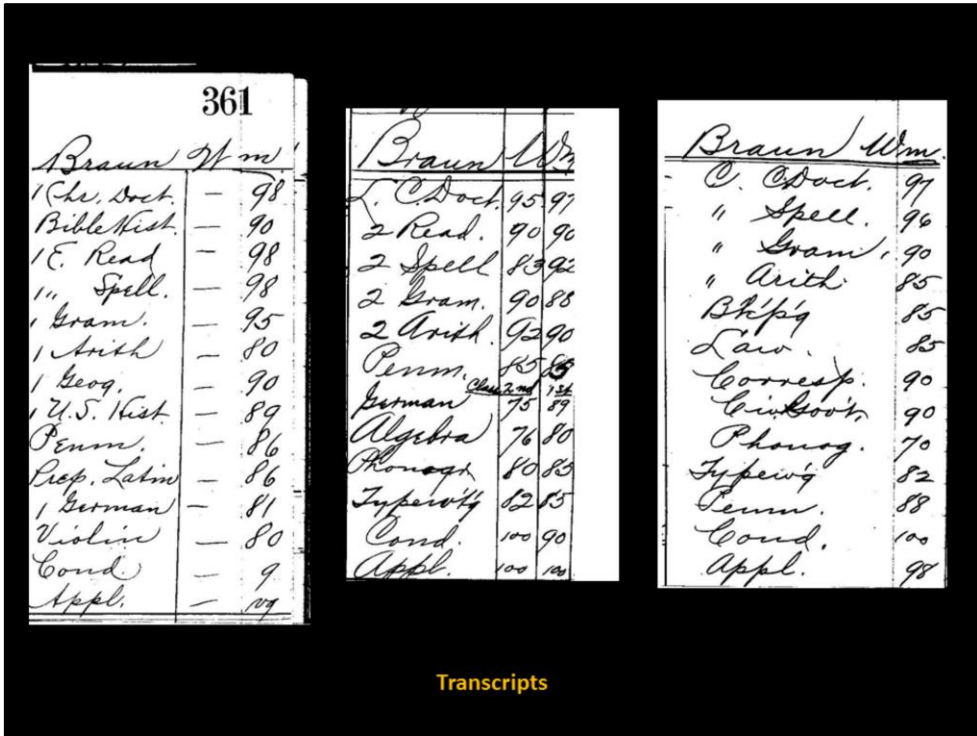
— Bro. Florian, O.S.B., who for the last five years was stationed at St. Martin's College, Lacey, Wash., returned to St. John's Oct. 11.

— William Braun of the Commercial Department spent a few days at his home in Wahpeton, N. Dak., where he attended at the wedding of his sister.

— Frs. Richard Simmer, Fridolin Tembreull, Claude Wiemann, Magnus Hermanutz, Bede Mayenberger and Innocent Gerken, all clerics of St. John's, made solemn vows Oct. 5.

The Record October 1901

The Record Sept. 1900 p.280
The Record Oct. 1901, p. 318



Transcripts

Transcript T-361 1899-1900

Transcript T-375 1900-1901

Transcript T-405 1901-1902

the pupil must pass but one examination, which he can do whenever he considers himself competent, provided he has completed his course of Book-keeping. All examinations must be made in writing. The grade required is 80 per cent.

William Braun's exam grades from Sept. 1901-March 1902

12	Braun Wm	Sept 10, 80	Oct 14, 80	Nov 4, 80	Nov 14, 80	Dec 2, 80	
		(1) "Journalizing"	(2)	Cash Book	(3)		
Nov 9, 90	Dec 9, 90	Dec 16, 90	Jan 19, 80	Jan 27, 80	Feb. 10, 80	Mar. 8, 80	Mar. 15, 1902
Spelling	Grammar	Comm Geogr.	US History	Pol. Econ	Comm Law	Comm Calc	Gen Review

Braun, Wm – scores on required exams. *Commercial Dept. 1877-1906* , 184ff, p. 1-2
 Top: excerpt from 1888-1889 *Catalog*, p. 9

Locals.

- Frei - heit! March 17.
- The Easter Bells are ringing.
- Say, throw me some pick-me-ups!
- "Stop your ranting, you anarchist!
- The ice on the lake disappeared entirely on March 27th.
- G.: "Go and see who rapped."
- F. (returning): "Oh, it was only a "spirit-rapper."
- Gunny says that Formaldehyde is the most efficacious eye-opener on the market at present.
- The following Commercial students have passed General Review during March: Hy. Dols, F. W. Schirber and Wm. Braun.
- Very Rev. Herman Bergmann, O.S.B., Prior of the Abbey, left for a trip to Washington and Oregon on March 12th. and returned on March 29th.
- Mops: "What do you think about that: Base-ball and ice-boating on the same day?"

The Record April 1902

The Record July 1902

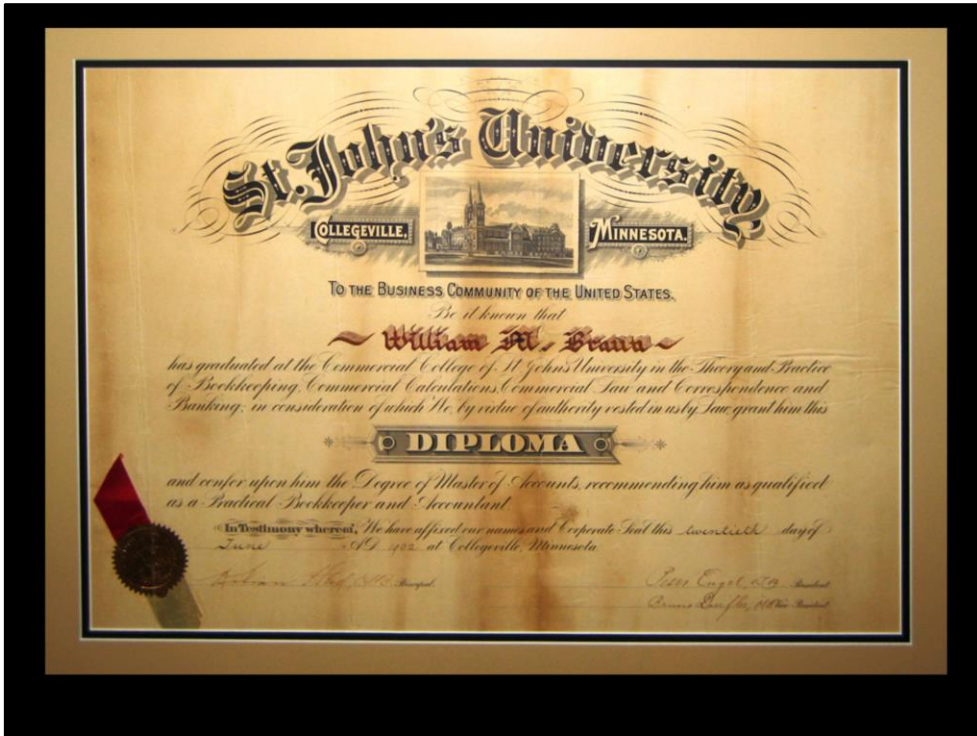
The Degree of Bachelor of Arts was conferred upon Messrs. Nicholas Nedere, Hastings, Minn., and Joseph Janousek, Veseleyville, N. Dak.

The Degree of Master of Accounts was conferred upon the following young men:

Clifford A. Walsh, Crookston, Minn.; Charles Ott, Genoa, Wis.; Louis G. Posch, St. Paul, Minn.; J. Ambrose Casey, Aitken, Minn.; John O'Leary, Sparta, Minn.; Alfred Lommel, Cold Springs, Minn.; John M. Wells, New Richmond, Wis.; Henry Dols, Chaska, Minn.; Frank W. Schirber, West Union, Minn.; William Braun, Wahpeton, N. Dak.; Herman Lentz, Adrian, Minn.; Philip E. Staagl, St. Cloud, Minn.; Martin Schirber, West Union, Minn.; Charles Schmit, St. Cloud, Minn.; Frank Barry, Stillwater, Minn.; Henry Guenser, Chaska, Minn.; Michael Schmit, St. Cloud, Minn.; Martin Gergen, New Trier, Minn.; Joseph Janousek, Veseleyville, N. Dak.; Henry H. Tembreull, Pierz, Minn.; Albert A. Lipinski, Chaska, Minn.; William Schulte, Torah, Minn.; Otto Kerper, New Vienna, Iowa.; Edmund Kerper, New Vienna, Iowa.; Martin Windschitl, Sleepy Eye, Minn.; John Bettendorf, Searles, Minn.; Joseph Koshiol, St. Cloud, Minn.; Albert Leitschuh, Minneapolis, Minn.; George J. Mainz, St. Cloud, Minn.; Hugh Vincent, Black

The Record 1902 April p.156 General Review

The Record 1902 July p.276 degree conferred



Braun Wm Diploma, displayed in the SJU Archives. Framed, it is more than two feet high and 2.5 feet wide!

No photos of William Braun turned up in the SJU Archives, but maybe he's in this one?!



1902 Class of St. John's Commercial School

A HISTORY OF ST. JOHN'S

First in a series

Evolution of Business

By Father Martin Schirber, OSB

The announcement last January of the election of Bernard Meiss, '38, to the presidency of the First American National Bank, of St. Cloud, and the promotion of George Meiss, '32, to the chairmanship of the board and presumably less active participation in management, renders timely a comparison of the types of business training offered by St. John's over the years. The elder Meiss was a typical product of the old Commercial Department, while Bernard, who graduated with a major in economics a few years after the establishment of the Department of Economics in college, is an example of a more recent model.

When the Benedictines came to Minnesota to establish monastic life on the frontier, they combined with a life of prayer the work of ministering to the spiritual needs of the German settlers and the training of priests to staff the parishes which would soon be springing up on all sides. Similarly in keeping with the Benedictine tradition, these early monks undertook to serve their new in a more material way by offering commercial courses to prepare young men for employment in the growing frontier communities. Soon after moving to the present site in 1867, the Fathers began offering courses in bookkeeping and other mundane subjects, and let it be known through the *Northwestern Chronicle* of St. Paul that St. John's operated "a distinct department for students wishing to receive a business education slow" (Italics added). "This is the first of a long series of attempts to remind

the public that St. John's was not purely a seminary — an impression which received its death-blow only after the college won its first football championship in 1902. In 1872 the school catalogue announced the establishment of a commercial department in which courses in bookkeeping, commercial arithmetic, and commercial law could be taken along with and partially in place of the regular pre-divinity subjects. In 1875, M.A. (Master of Accounts) degrees were conferred upon eight graduates, among whom were such famous names as William Hamm and Frank Schlink, of St. Paul, and Francis Cutler, brother of Joseph B. Cutler, who later became bishop of Winona.

By the middle seventies, however, the school authorities began to succumb to demands for a speed-up. Most students found the three-year combined classical and commercial course too costly and time-consuming, and the enrollment of the school was far below capacity. It was decided therefore to reduce the course to the bare essentials and turn the students out in three to five months. Under this assembly-line program, they could begin at any time, progress as rapidly as their talents and abilities would permit, and pass out into the business world no longer with a Master of Accounts degree, but a simple, non-committal diploma.

Liberal Education

By the end of the century, this frontier demand for speed at the expense of breadth and depth was beginning to give way to the traditional emphasis upon liberal as well as vocational education. Students in the commercial department were required to take history, geography, government, and economics along with their accounting, shorthand, typing, and commercial law. By the end of the century the course was lengthened to a full year and in 1906 to two years.

As the frontier moved farther west, it became more and more apparent that even this broader two-year course was insufficient preparation for the prospective business man, and one of the first of many changes by Abbot Alcibi was to merge the commercial depart-



1902 Class of St. John's Commercial School

Schirber, Martin, OSB. "Evolution of Business," *St. John's Alumni Magazine*, April 1961, vol. 1 no. 1, p. 4-5.

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/1125/show/1109>

Fr. Martin was SJU's Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences from 1943-1952.

The old Commercial Department served a real need during the days of early settlement. A large proportion of the graduates became leaders in the cities and rural communities of Minnesota and surrounding states.

ment with the regular four-year College Preparatory. Graduates of the Prep School could now take their

agents, lawyers, county officials, etc. They advised and advised frontier families in a wide range of legal and commercial matters, from drawing up wills to talking young farmers out of going into debt beyond their capacity. Through experience and self-study, many of them acquired a knowledge of law and business practice which would compare favorably with that of a trained lawyer or accountant today.

A New Look

The Department of Economics considers itself the logical descendant of the old Commercial Department, and seeks to perform a parallel service. While anxious to share its share of parentage among the student body, and urging gifted young men to go on to graduate school and a career in research or high level administration, it has taken a special interest in the

Many of the settlers were immigrants who could neither read nor write English, while all of them were handier with axe or plow than with pen or account book. The commercial grads therefore rendered an invaluable service to frontier communities as bankers, real estate agents, lawyers, county officials, etc. They assisted and advised frontier families in a wide range of legal and commercial matters, from drawing up wills to talking young farmers out of going into debt beyond their capacity. Through experience and self-study, many of them acquired a knowledge of law and business practice which would compare favorably with that of a trained lawyer or accountant today.

When they are properly nurtured and provided, a curriculum results."



George Meina, '08, was succeeded by his son, George, '38, as president of the First American National Bank of St. Cloud. The elder Meina will serve as chairman of the bank's board of directors.

With Father McCloskey, members of the Department of Economics at St. John's hold the view that students subjected to a properly balanced curriculum which includes courses that impart vocational skills as well as habits of clear analytical thought in place of cliché, together with the usual liberal disciplines ranging from art to theology, have as much chance of gaining a liberal education as their classmates who emerge from the educational mill as majors in chemistry, math, or history.

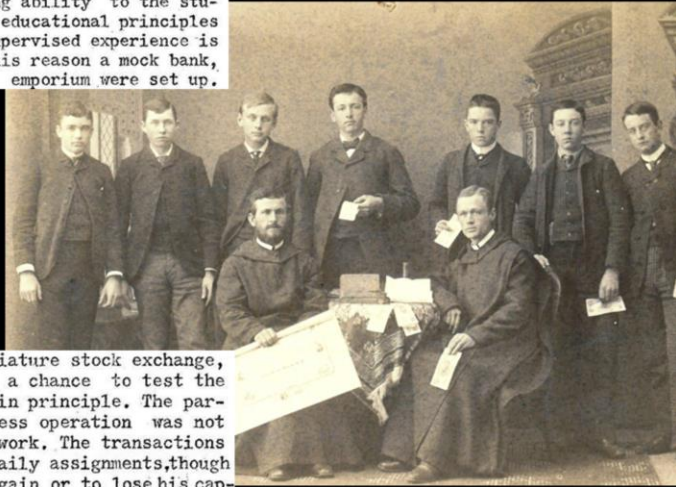
As a matter of fact, however, the Department of Economics offers only 20 semester hours of vocational courses—all of them in accounting or business law—and none of them are required for a degree in economics. The remainder of the required courses in economics are designed to deepen the student's understanding of economic institutions and processes, and to give him facility in thinking critically and analytically concerning social and economic matters. A student who takes full advantage of such an educational menu, supplemented with the wide variety of general education courses required of all students at St. John's, can hardly fail to measure up to the concept of a liberally educated man.

Schirber, Martin, OSB. "Evolution of Business," *St. John's Alumni Magazine*, April 1961, vol. 1 no. 1, p. 4-5.

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/1125/show/1109>

This new commercial college placed emphasis on giving a practical working ability to the student. In line with good educational principles the monks realized that supervised experience is the best teacher. For this reason a mock bank, business department, and emporium were set up.

1886 Commercial Students



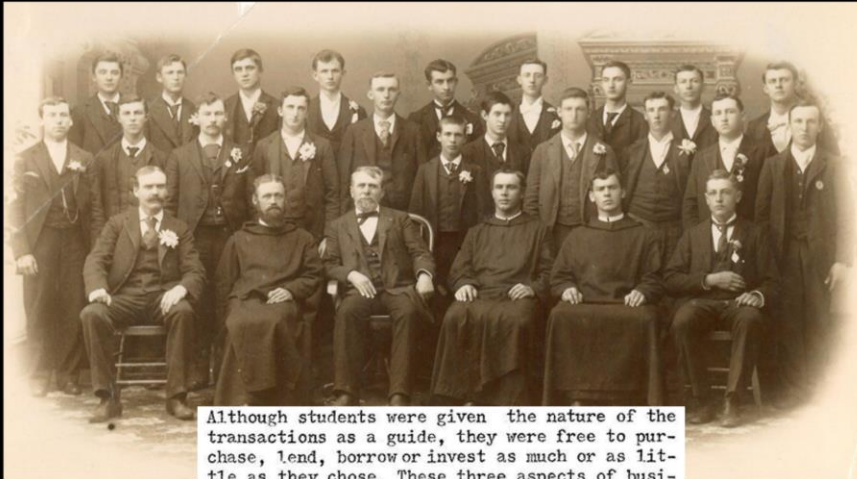
In this room, a miniature stock exchange, the local capitalists had a chance to test the theories they had learned in principle. The participation in this business operation was not independent of classroom work. The transactions that were performed were daily assignments, though a person had a chance to gain or to lose his capital according to his ability. All business ventures were managed by the students themselves as they took turns being the tellers and brokers as well as the investors. Play-money was issued to each student when he began the course, but the course was not necessarily ended if the student lost all his money.

Experiential learning!!

Burns & Thole, *Scriptorium*, 1957, p. 94

Photo in the SJU Archives: PC07.0343 Box 11 n. 18 1886 Commercial Students

1894 Commercial Class with Minnesota Governor Knute Nelson

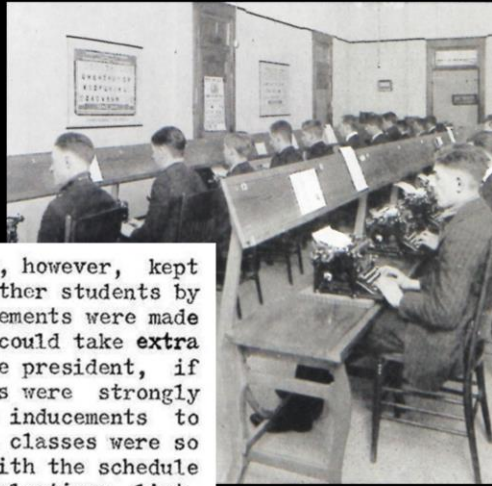


Although students were given the nature of the transactions as a guide, they were free to purchase, lend, borrow or invest as much or as little as they chose. These three aspects of business--the bank, the emporium or general store, and the business office--composed an almost complete list as far as the field of operations of the midwest small businessman was concerned. Certainly no more practical solution could be offered to people who wanted usable training in a hurry.

Photo in the SJU Archives: PC06.0008 2 1894/PC07.0306 Commercials with Governor Knute Nelson

Burns & Thole, *Scriptorium*, 1957, p. 94-95

The central room of instruction was on the first floor of the main quadrangle where classroom 136 is now located. Here classes were held each day from 8:00 to 12:00 a.m. and from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.



The commercial student was not, however, kept completely separated from the other students by his specialized courses. Arrangements were made so that any commercial student could take extra courses at terms arranged by the president, if he so desired. These electives were strongly encouraged and were listed as inducements to prospective students. Any extra classes were so designed as not to interfere with the schedule of the commercial school. These electives, listed in the catalogue, were penmanship, commercial arithmetic and English belles-lettres.

Klingeman, David. "A Trip Through the Archives: Saint John's Commercial College, 1877-1921." *The Record*, Dec. 12, 2002, p. 4.

Text from Burns & Thole, *Scriptorium*, 1957, p. 95

Commercial Course

This course contains two grades. The first grade comprises those studies that compose the foundation for a profitable pursuit of the technical commercial subjects. It is in these fundamental subjects that the majority of applicants for commercial studies are deficient.

Applicants sufficiently advanced will be admitted to the second grade upon passing a satisfactory written examination.

The following studies are assigned and are obligatory:

I GRADE

Bookkeeping
Penmanship
Spelling
Reading
Grammar
Arithmetic
Descriptive Geography
U. S. History
Civil Government
Catechism.

II GRADE

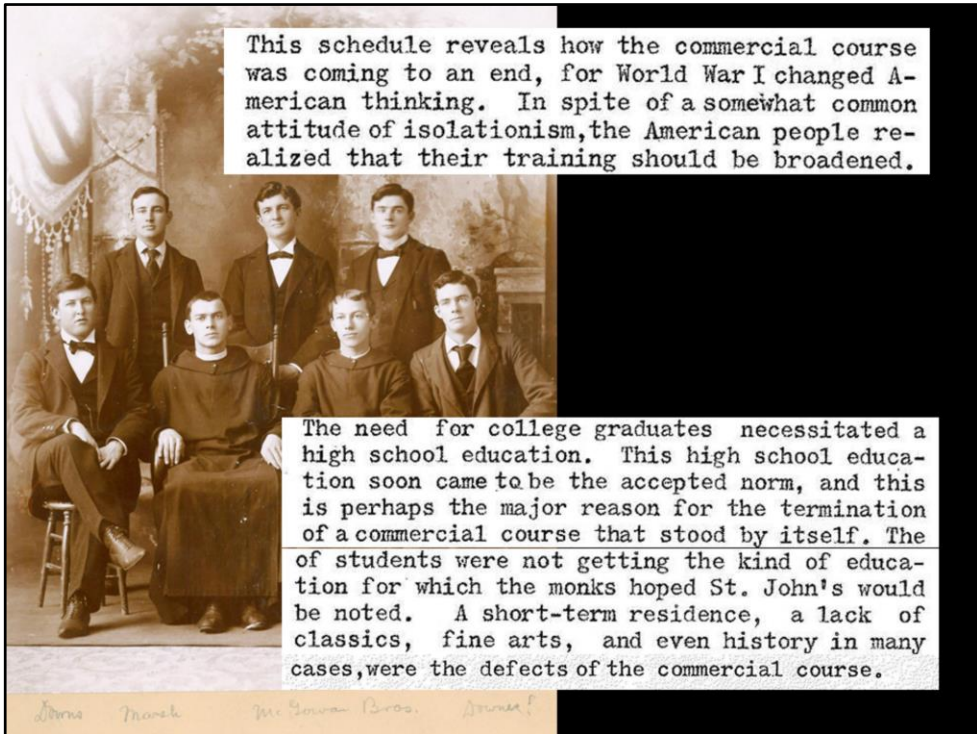
Bookkeeping
Penmanship
Spelling
Forms & Correspondence
Grammar
Arithmetic
Com
Com
Parl
Cate

1906-1907 Catalog

"It was observed that students considered themselves fully equipped for commercial life when they had learned a system of bookkeeping. They soon discovered that ... without an ordinary fundamental education, the knowledge of bookkeeping was a pure delusion."

Bookkeeping By placing the study of Bookkeeping first, we do not wish the student to infer that it is the principal or most important study. In fact, too many young men think the only study necessary for a commercial education is bookkeeping. We wish to state here emphatically that the other studies of the course are considered paramount, if not superior to bookkeeping.

1906-07 Catalog, p. 40 & 41



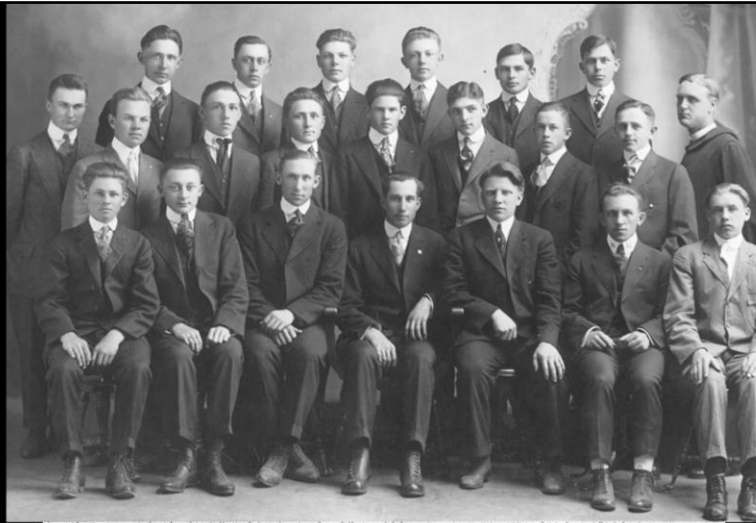
This schedule reveals how the commercial course was coming to an end, for World War I changed American thinking. In spite of a somewhat common attitude of isolationism, the American people realized that their training should be broadened.

The need for college graduates necessitated a high school education. This high school education soon came to be the accepted norm, and this is perhaps the major reason for the termination of a commercial course that stood by itself. The of students were not getting the kind of education for which the monks hoped St. John's would be noted. A short-term residence, a lack of classics, fine arts, and even history in many cases, were the defects of the commercial course.

Dorns March Mc Gowan Bros. Jones!

Burns & Thole, *Scriptorium*, 1957, p. 103-104.

Photo in the SJU Archives: PC07.0310 Box 10 n. 08 1897 Stillwater Commercial Students.



Thus in 1922, the beginning of the first full year of Abbot Alcuin's rule at St. John's, the familiar commercial course gave way completely to a four - year college preparatory course designed along classical lines, yet with full provision for students who wished to prepare for a life in business.

Burns & Thole, *Scriptorium*, 1957, p. 104

Photo in the SJU Archives: PC06.0017 Commercial Students about 1915

The passing of the commercial course marked a milestone in St. John's history. While it remained, it delayed to a degree the development of a liberal arts college. But in the years from 1872 to 1922 the commercial school had given a large number of trained Catholic businessmen to the upper midwest. The commercial school could close on a note of pride and self-satisfaction.



Members of the community, students, alumni and the people who are served by the abbey all owe a debt of thanks to the pioneers who fostered this part of St. John's, and to the men who attended the school because they saw the value of a commercial education.

Burns & Thole, *Scriptorium*, 1957, p. 104

Photo in the SJU Archives: PC06.0005 1918 Comm 400 Sr Hall Elite

Sources

Hoffmann, Alexius, OSB. [1863-1940], *St. John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota: A sketch of its history*. Collegeville, Minn.: Record Press, 1907.

<http://www.csbsju.edu/SJU-Archives/SJUHistory/BooksaboutStJohns/HoffmannBook.htm>

Burns, Aurelius, OSB, and Simeon Thole, OSB. "St. John's Commercial School," *Scriptorium*, 1957, vol. 16, p. 89-104 (p. 100-115 of the pdf)

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/3404>

Schirber, Martin, OSB. "Evolution of Business," *St. John's Alumni Magazine*, April 1961, v. 1 n. 1, p. 4-5.

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/1125/show/1109>

Fr. Martin Schirber was Professor of Economics and was SJU's Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences from 1943-1952.

Klingeman, David, OSB. "A Trip Through the Archives: Saint John's Commercial College, 1877-1921." *The Record*, Dec. 12, 2002, p. 4.

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CSBArchNews/id/31950/show/31939>

All of the issues of SJU's catalogs, *The Record* student newspapers, and many other resources have been digitized and are available at: <http://www.csbsju.edu/SJU-Archives/DigitalArchives.htm>

Compiled in December 2013 from resources in the
SJU Archives and the St. John's Abbey Archives
by Peggy Landwehr Roske, CSB/SJU Archivist.

All rights reserved.

Bibliography & credits