

**HISTORICAL TRIBUTE TO
ST. THOMAS' SEMINARY
AT POPLAR NECK, NEAR
BARDSTOWN, KENTUCKY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649252480

Historical tribute to St. Thomas' Seminary at Poplar Neck, near Bardstown, Kentucky by Wm. J. Howlett

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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WM. J. HOWLETT

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REV. W. J. HOWLETT.

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TO
ST. THOMAS' SEMINARY
AT
POPLAR NECK
NEAR
BARDSTOWN, KENTUCKY.

BY
REV. WM. J. HOWLETT.

"Fas est et decet meminisse fratrum."

B. HERDER, ST. LOUIS, MO.
17 South Broadway,

1906.

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Denver, Colo. June 9, 1916.

MY DEAR FATHER NOWLETT:-

I have read every word of your book, from Preface to Finis, and let me assure you in all sincerity that it has been many a day since I read a book with such genuine pleasure. I congratulate you most cordially on the completion of this delightful tribute to the Mother Seminary of the West, the cradle of the Church in Kentucky. Those of the alumni who still live should be grateful for the work you have done to preserve in such excellent form the story of an institution which has given many self-sacrificing, heroic, saintly missionaries to the Church. Old St. Thomas' has a remarkable story, a unique history.

I realize the amount of work and patience required in collecting, selecting and arranging the material. This was not an easy task, but you have done the work remarkably well. It can easily be seen that you did not consider it an irksome task, but a labor of love.

I cannot write a fraction of what I desire to say in praise of this "Historical Tribute", but I will say that I consider your descriptions most vivid. The second Chapter is good and spicy; the last two Chapters are masterpieces. I am particularly pleased with certain paragraphs wherein you strike the right key, but I have not found an uninteresting paragraph or one dull line in the entire work.

Wishing your book a wide circulation, and hoping it may prove beneficial to many readers who never before heard of St. Thomas' Seminary, I remain

Yours faithfully,

+ R. C. Matz
Bishop of Denver

DEDICATION.

To the Memory of the Dear, Homely, Old Institution—Kentucky's First Well-Spring of Piety and Learning; To the Students, Who, Within Its Walls, Learned to Love God and to Love One Another, And To the Teachers Who Taught Them These Lessons, These Pages Are Lovingly Inscribed By

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

Viewed in certain lights, time and space are small matters. Nearly forty years have gone by since the last student passed out from Old St. Thomas' Seminary, and yet its form, shape, spirit and life have not dimmed perceptibly in the recollection of those who were its inmates, and the home-like grasp that it took upon their nature has not loosened in the jar of the rolling wheels of time. Far and near, the old students share the same more than kindly feelings for the old place, and each one of them could voice his tribute from his distance with the same force as if he were present at the gates. So, at this distant day and place, it is mine to say what all have felt at every moment since Old St. Thomas' bade them adieu and blessed them for higher labors.

I first saw St. Thomas' Seminary in its active, busy days, while its glory was still around it like a halo, and its hope for a long and vigorous life was strong and bright. I last saw it less than a ruin, but its honor was unstained, and its memory was held in benediction. Desolation reigned around it, and silence and sadness brooded over it, yet the echo of the old-time free and happy life came from it, and the perfume of a thousand loves was wafted back to it from as many hearts that beat with pleasant and grateful remembrance. In that moment came the thought and inspiration to write something, and this tribute is the fruit of that visit.

PREFACE.

While securing historical permanency to the course of the oldest Seminary in the West, my intention has been rather to give definite form to the many expressions of affection and reverence for the old *Alma Mater* and those connected with it, to embody the general feelings of all old St. Thomas' students and to indicate the reasons for the universal good will.

To do this, I have taken the more important incidents connected with the establishment of the Seminary, its internal working, and the special and lasting results that trace their causes to it. Minor matters of detail I have used to show the connection between the greater events and the unity of spirit and action that ran through the whole course of its existence.

He who stands upon the top of the highest peak in the early morning and sees beneath him a sea of white mist, through which only the summits of the surrounding mountains penetrate, gets no real or adequate idea of actual mountain scenery unless he waits until the sun has dispersed the cloud that fills every valley and hides it from his view. Then he will see the abutting bases of the mountains, the ridges that connect them, the valleys that give them greater prominence and the gorges that are avenues of escape for what, if pent up, might become destroying floods. The beauty, the perfection and the unity of the rugged scene is then recognized, and even the distant plain comes in as a harmonious part, for towards it the dashing, roaring torrents leap, there to lose their fierceness and calmly expend their energy in giving fertility and fruit.

Just so, the little things in the history of Old St. Thomas', and the incidents in individual lives belong to the general picture, to give it unity and harmony,