

THE HOLY CROSS HISTORY CONFERENCE, 1982-2021

In 2021 the Holy Cross History Conference will be forty years old and it seemed appropriate to offer a retrospective on this auspicious occasion. As the only one of the three founders still alive, it has fallen to me to do the honors.

The first conference was the brainchild of three local archivists: Brother John Kuhn from the Midwest Province of the Brothers of Holy Cross, Sister Campion Kuhn from the Sisters of the Holy Cross and myself, archivist for the Indiana Province of the Priests and Brothers, at the time. We occasionally had lunch together and one day I mentioned that I was surprised that no one ever made use of the materials in my archives to write about the history of the congregation. The other two remarked that they had a similar quandary. We decided to organize a conference on the history of Holy Cross as a way of stimulating interest and giving anyone who was working on Holy Cross history an opportunity to present their work. We expected that perhaps ten or twelve people would come and that if it went well, sometime in the future we might hold a second conference.

The first conference was held at Moreau Seminary in March 1982 and to our surprise more than sixty people from the U.S. and Canada attended. This large and enthusiastic attendance encouraged us to organize a second conference in 1983. Over fifty people attended and there was enough interest to lead us to decide to make it an annual event. Several of those who came stayed on after the conference and together we decided to organize an entity to organize annual conferences. This was the origin of the Holy Cross History Association. Dues were set at five dollars per year in recognition that many of the prospective members were religious living on very modest personal budgets. We also decided to move the site of the conference from year to year to places where there was a concentration of Holy Cross religious. This would also allow those who lived some distance away from Notre Dame to attend at least occasionally when the conference was held at a site near them. The third conference was held at St. Mary's College in 1984, the fourth at King's College in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, 1985, the fifth at St. Edward's university in 1986 and the sixth at Notre Dame College in Manchester, New Hampshire in 1987. All of these conferences drew Holy Cross people from the local area. In the forty years since 1982 the conference has met at sixteen different locales from Oregon to Massachusetts, and from Indiana to Louisiana and Texas as well as some places in between. More than half of the conferences have met in the Notre Dame area.

The rationale for the conferences was to provide a venue for people who might be working on some aspect of Holy Cross history to present their work and to stimulate interest in the history of all the communities that stemmed from the foundations of Basile Moreau and Jacques Dujarié at Le Mans, France, in the nineteenth century. To date, more than three hundred papers have been presented and several have been published in academic journals after a trial run at a Holy Cross History Conference. While some of the presentations were better than others, all have been deposited in the Archives of the Sisters of the Holy Cross at St. Mary's College and are available on the History Association's website: holycrosshistory.com