

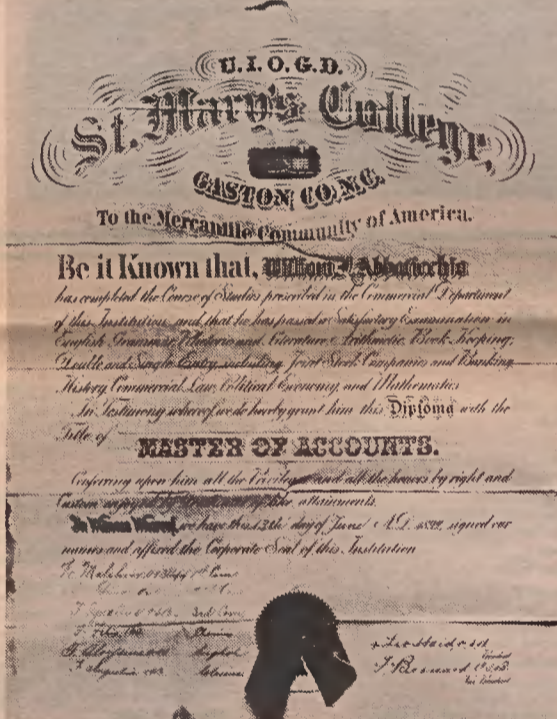
"Those Were the Days!"

97 year-old alumnus tells what the Abbey was like

Editor's Notes: Two Belmont Abbey College recruiters several months ago interviewed an alumnus of the college in his home in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. They taped their conversation and the alumnus' reminiscences. The following story was written from that tape.

He celebrated his 97th birthday June 5. When he first came to Belmont Abbey College at the age of 17, Belmont was a small village, and on Saturday afternoons he and his friends would idle away the hours at a small country store two miles from campus.

William John Abbaticchio remembers his two years well at what was then known as St. Mary's College. He was one of about 200 students at the college in 1897. He lived with his fellow students in St. Leo's, then a dormitory and classroom building, where they lived barracks-style, not one of two to a room.



William Abbaticchio's diploma was presented to him in 1899 before the college's name became Belmont Abbey

How did a 17-year-old boy from Latrobe, Pa. find his way to the North Carolina village of Belmont? "Fr. Aloysius picked up about a dozen students in Latrobe and we took the train down. I remember stopping in Washington, D. C., and I climbed to the top of the Washington Monument. That was the only time in my life that I ever went into the monument."

Abbaticchio recalled that Abbot Leo Haid, O.S.B., founder of St. Mary's College and Mary Help of Christians Abbey, was a "very majestic person. I remember one time I was taking roses from out of the church and he saw me; he threw apples at me," he laughed. Abbot Haid was a native of Latrobe.

While at St. Mary's, Abbaticchio remembers the monks had a farm and produced their own food. "I remember eating pancakes and grits in the dining room. You know, I really like them. One time a few years after graduating I went to Washington on the train. In a restaurant I asked for grits, but the waitress told me I was too far north."

In the 1890's students apparently only infrequently went to Charlotte and Gastonia. "We didn't go into town very often," Abbaticchio says. He still has a photo of one trip to Charlotte.

Abbaticchio's diploma is worded unlike modern ones. It says, "St. Mary's College, Gaston Co., N. C. To the Mercantile Community of America. Be it known that, William J. Abbaticchio has completed the Course of Studies prescribed in the Commercial Department of this Institution, and that he has passed a Satisfactory Examination in English Grammar, Rhetoric and

"I was taking roses from out of the church and he (Abbot Leo Haid) saw me; he threw apples at me."

Literature, Arithmetic, Book Keeping, Double and Single Entry, including Joint Stock Companies and Banking, History, Commercial Law, Political Economy, and Mathematics.

"In Testimony whereof, we do hereby grant him this

SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE, BELMONT, GASTON COUNTY, N. C.

Master William Abbaticchio,
Student of the 2nd Year, has merited the following
Notes in the various branches during the 1st Quarter of the
Scholastic Year 18

Conduct	98	Bible History	
Order	98	Geography	98
Application	99	Natural Philosophy	
Neatness and Punctuality	99	Physiology	
Health	100	Chemistry	
Religious Instruction	98	Astronomy	
Latin		Geology	
Greek		Botany	
Reading	98	Political Economy	
Spelling and Defining	94	Civil Government	
English Grammar	97	Commercial Law	
English Rhetoric		Land Surveying	
English Literature		Elocution	
English Composition	80	English Penmanship	100
Prosody		German Penmanship	
German	67	Phonography	
French		Type Writing	
Spanish		Mechanical Drawing	
Qualitative Analysis		Architectural Drawing	
Trigonometry		Freehand Drawing	
Geometry		Telegraphy	
Algebra		Piano	
Arithmetic	94	Violin	
Book-Keeping	92	Vocal Music	
History	90	Gregorian Chant	

Standard, 100 per cent. 14 1/2% Average Director.

A college report card from the late 1890's



William J. Abbaticchio, 97, 1899 Abbey Alumnus.

Diploma with the Title of Master of Accounts.

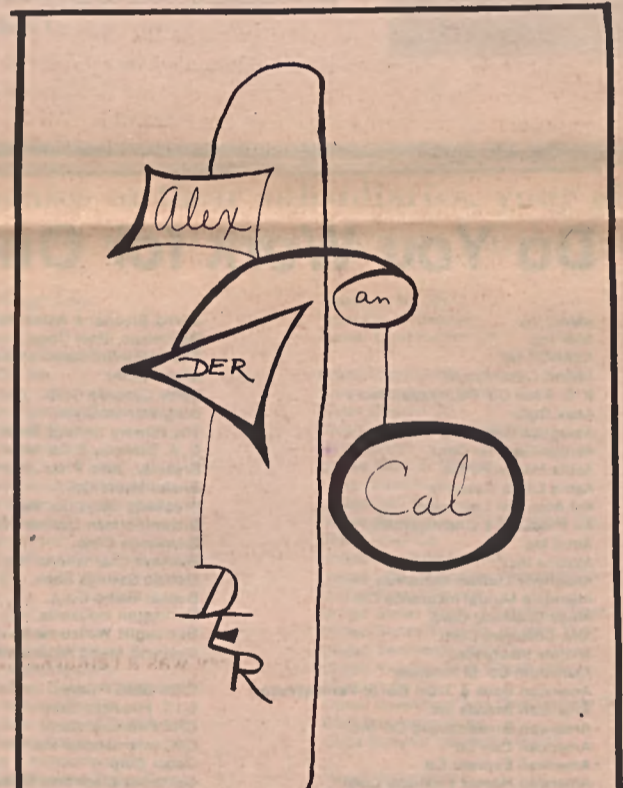
"Conferring upon him all the Privileges and all the honors by right and Custom enjoyed by Graduate of like attainments.

"In Witness Whereof, we have this 13th day of June A.D. 1899 signed our names and affixed the Corporate Seal of this Institution."

Signers, in addition to Abbot Haid, who was president of the college, were Fr. Bernard, vice president, Fr. Melchior, Fr. George, Fr. Ignatius, Fr. Felix, Fr. Aloysius and Fr. Augustine.

When he left Belmont, Abbaticchio went to McKeesport, Pa. He was married in 1906 and worked in Pennsylvania in private industry and the state. He retired when he was 80 years old. Several years ago he and his wife moved to Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., where he now lives. His wife died a few years ago. Of 10 children born to Archangelo and Sorentino Abbaticchio, he is the sole survivor. He has a son and a daughter.

Still active at 97, he attends Mass daily, and is independent, cooking his own meals and cleaning his condominium apartment.



Fr. John Oetgen, O.S.B., professor of English at B.A.C., won a "Sassy Signatures" contest conducted by a local newspaper with this signature of the late sculptor Alexander Calder's name. He's famous for mobiles. (Photo courtesy of The Charlotte Observer.)

Fr. John sign a winner

A signature of the late sculptor Alexander Calder's name was judged the most original and clever submitted by 872 persons in a recent Charlotte newspaper contest.

The signature, pictured here, was drawn by Fr. John Oetgen, O.S.B., professor of English at B.A.C., and depicts Calder's name as a mobile, an art form for which the sculptor was famous.

"This contest seemed to be sort of a challenge," Fr. John says. Fr. John, 52, has been at the Abbey since his ordination in 1951. He is a native of Savannah, Ga. For his efforts Fr. John received \$10 as first prize.