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Fordham University Press, 1907-2007

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Fordham University Press was established in 1907 by the Dean of Fordham’s Medical School, Dr. James J. Walsh. Dr. Walsh got permission from the University to use the name Fordham University Press even though he funded it privately and kept the profits that it made. Dr. Walsh was himself a prolific author. He wrote 26 books including *The Thirteenth, Greatest of Centuries* which was widely read for several decades. Walsh ran the press from 1907 until 1914 when he stopped publishing under that imprint. In 1922 the University decided to resurrect the imprint, and an agreement was signed by Dr. Walsh and the administration turning over ownership of the Press to the University.

Fr. Rush Rankin, S.J., the Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, which at that time was housed in the Woolworth Building in lower Manhattan, was put in charge of the Press. He began publishing books in English literature, law, philosophy, education, and psychology. In 1932, the Press was moved out of the Woolworth Building to Fordham’s Bronx campus and Fr. Aloysius Hogan, S.J., the President of the University, took responsibility for running it. In 1936, Fr. Robert Holland, S.J. took it over.

Throughout its history the Press has gone through several periods of hard times. The University has always subsidized the Press, but at times, the subsidies were hard to come by and the University tried to find other ways to keep the Press going, and sometimes even considered shutting it down. In 1946, the Declan X. McMullen Company and Fordham University entered into an agreement whereby McMullen bought Fordham Press’ inventory and took over the administration of the Press. They continued to publish books under the name of Fordham University Press, but no Fordham personnel had a role in administering the Press.

In 1956, Fordham ended the agreement with Declan McMullen and appointed Fr. Edwin A. Quain, S.J., Director of the Press. Fr. Quain hired a competent staff and the Press entered into the most productive period in its history.

In 1968 the University administration decided to reconsider its support of the Press and to close it down. The staff of the Press was, of course, opposed to such a move and objected to the administration and the Board of Trustees. It was decided that the staff would be allowed to hire a consultant to study the
problem and make an independent recommendation. The consultant
convinced the board and administration that the University should not close
the Press, but should hire a new director who could increase sales and
thereby reduce the amount of subsidy needed to keep it running.

Among the most popular titles published by the Press are Gerald Quinn’s
*Greek, an Intensive Course*, the *Autobiography of St. Ignatius Loyola*,
*Deconstruction in a Nutshell* by Jacques Derrida, and *Under the Sidewalks
of New York: the Story of the Greatest Subway System in the World* by
Brian Cudahy. But its most famous title was the aforementioned *The
Thirteenth, Greatest of Centuries* by James J. Walsh. Published in 1907, it
was the first book issued by the Press. By 1929 it had sold over 70,000
copies. It is now out of print but by 1952 it had gone through 25 printings
and/or editions. In its one hundred year history the Press has published 857
monographs and five journals: *IPQ (International Philosophical Quarterly)*,
*Thought*, and *Baker Street Journal*, all of which have been discontinued, and
*Traditio* and the *Dante Journal* which are still being published. Next year
the Press plans to start publishing a new journal, *Joyce Studies*.

The Press is the oldest Catholic university press in America but it is also the
smallest university press in America. This year it will publish about 45
titles. It has about 500 titles in print and sells close to a million dollars
worth of books per year. Its current subject interests include philosophy,
religion, literature, and other areas in the humanities and social sciences. It
has also developed an interesting list of titles on the history of the New York
metropolitan region, transportation and military history.

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