

Archival Resources on the Web

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Benedictine College Archives Collaborates with Campus Partners for WWII Veterans' Exhibit

By Julia T. Fassero, Benedictine College Archives

Do you remember your freshman dorm room? Better yet, do you remember for whom your dorm room was named? Many college graduates may not remember their freshman dorm room, or for whom it was named. At Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, that's changing.

As the 70th anniversary of St. Martin's Memorial Hall approached in October 2021, college leadership knew they wanted to create a connection between the past and the present. Dedicated in 1951 to the students of St. Benedict's College (now Benedictine College) who died in military service during World War II, St. Martin's Memorial Hall has a unique—but relatively uncelebrated—history. Each room is named for a soldier, but little information was known about these men until last year. November 11, 2021, presented an opportunity to reveal the legacy of these soldiers while celebrating three important events: the 70th anniversary of the residence hall, Veterans Day, and the feast of St. Martin of Tours (after whom the dorm is named). The Benedictine College Archives was asked to research and write the biographies of the 50 soldiers linked to the college. These biographies were incorporated into the celebration, hung by each room in Memorial Hall, and published online as an exhibit titled *Heroes of St. Martin's*.

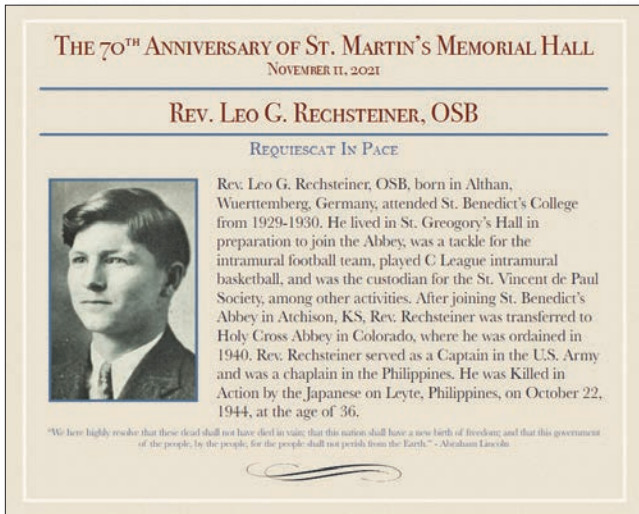
The Benedictine College Archives was formally established in the fall of 2021. While the college dates back to 1858, it was originally two separate schools: St. Benedict's College, a school for boys, and Mount St. Scholastica College, a women's school across town. In 1971, they merged into Benedictine College. While both sponsoring institutions have their own archives (which contain much information related to the early years of St. Benedict's College and Mount St. Scholastica College), Benedictine College did not have an archivist or a formal archives until August 2021.

The online exhibit *Heroes of St. Martin's* was the first major project undertaken by the Benedictine College Archives.

This was an excellent opportunity for the archives to step in and facilitate an encounter between past and present. A biography was hung by each door in the dorm, and an online exhibit was created to make these biographies more accessible for the general public, as well as to make a lasting display honoring these students of Benedictine College.

Creating the brief biographies required two phases: research and writing. Research required numerous different sources—from searching online for obituaries and service records, to requesting help from local historical societies. Additionally, the Benedictine College Archives—particularly the college yearbooks—provided valuable information pertaining to each student's time at St. Benedict's College, his degree (if graduated), his extracurricular activities, his leadership roles, and his hometown information. Kathy Garrison, class notes coordinator of the college's Office of Advancement, assisted in research and provided connections to the relatives of the soldiers. For example, the nephew of First Lieutenant Norman Bernard Mayse clarified biographical details, enabling his service records to be located. The living descendants of one of the men, First Lieutenant Robert Hogan, were notified and informed of the project.

The writing phase required the development of a uniform format for each biography. While information was available for some soldiers, for others, very little was known. Deciding what essential information was needed for each individual helped optimize the length and style of each biography. While the core elements of each biography remained the same, each was tailored to best fit the individual. Many of the biographies were paired with photos of the men: either as students or in service uniforms. A significant obstacle to this project was the lack of photos for every person. A continued project goal in the coming months is to locate the remaining missing photos. Examples of biographies—one with details, another without—are included here.



The landing page of the Heroes of St. Martin's project. Access the online exhibit at www.benedictine.edu/StMartinHeroes.

Second Lieutenant Philip James Beisner's biography is highly individualized:

Second Lieutenant Philip James Beisner, born in Salina, KS, attended St. Benedict's College from 1938–1942. He majored in Business Administration, was a member of the Holy Name Society, International Relations Club, an intramural bowling champion, and a member of the amateur drama club during his time at St. Benedict's. 2d Lt. Beisner served in the US Army Air Forces in the 492nd Fighter Squadron, 48th Fighter Group before he was killed in Germany on September 27, 1944, at the age of 23.

Information about his extracurricular activities—including clubs and intramurals—was readily available during the research phase and resulted in a biography that really draws the reader into his life. His military service was available online and provided details about when and where he was killed.

In contrast to 2d Lt. Beisner's personalized biography, very little information was available about some soldiers. Despite continued research attempts, some information was un retrievable. The biography of Sergeant Joseph Panepinto is an example of a basic biography:

Sergeant Joseph Panepinto, born in Indiana, attended St. Benedict's College from 1938–1939. There is very little information about his time at college or his background. Sgt. Panepinto served in the US Army Air Corps before he died in a non-battle incident on September 16, 1943, at the age of 24.

Little information about Sgt. Panepinto could be found. Future goals for this online exhibit include updating impersonal biographies such as Sgt. Panepinto's as more information is found.

While the content creation was completed by the college archivist, the online display was created by the Marketing Department. Steve Johnson, director of marketing and communications, said that he was "interested in creating a notable name and online presence for the Heroes of St. Martin's so these men could be properly remembered for their sacrifice." The college's web administrator, Joseph Rioux, created an excellent online exhibit. The exhibit is set up like a "digital dorm," which allows viewers to go floor by floor to see biographies. Each floor is divided by rooms so that current students or previous residents can find the man after whom their room is named. Working directly with the in-house experts was an excellent choice for designing the web-based portion of the project, as it freed the archivist to focus on other elements.



The landing page of the Heroes of St. Martin's project. Access the online exhibit at www.benedictine.edu/StMartinHeroes.

While creating an archives exhibit on the web comes with its fair share of complications, three main benefits stand out. First, the accessibility it provides to those around the world is significant. Instead of a limited sphere of people being able to access the biographies of these soldiers, anyone with access to a computer can learn more about Benedictine College's ties to World War II. Second, while physical exhibits require more time, effort, and money to change and adapt, an online exhibit provides the right amount of flexibility. With a web-based exhibit, as new information is gathered, it can easily be added. Third, the semipermanence of the web—though questions of digital preservation arise—offered the Benedictine College Archives the ideal way to commemorate the legacy of these 50 men who died in the service of their nation.

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ARCHIVAL RESOURCES ON THE WEB—Continued
Lauren White, Assistant Editor

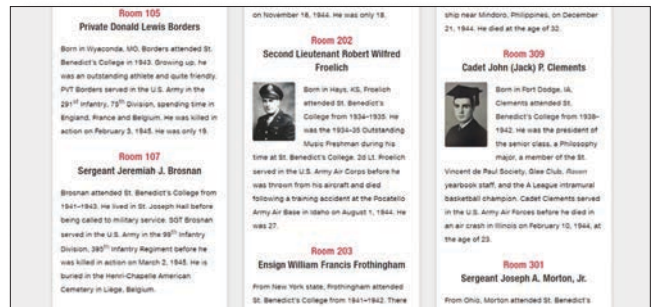
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The response to the Heroes of St. Martin’s project was incredibly positive. The residents of the St. Martin’s Memorial Hall were moved by the sacrifices made by these young men. Barney Mayse, nephew of First Lieutenant Norman Mayse, thanked Benedictine College for the “wonderful memorial for [Norman Mayse] and the others who served and died during the war.” People from across the country have accessed the online exhibit, which will remain online for the foreseeable future. As more information is discovered and more photographs are found, the Benedictine College Archives will continue to update the exhibit. Steve Johnson said, “It is my hope that Benedictine students access the information moving forward, as well as family members of the men remembered, and the general public. Some of the stories are truly amazing.” *Heroes of St. Martin’s* is available online at www.benedictine.edu/StMartinHeroes.

St. Martin's Memorial Hall - 1st Floor			
SECOND LIEUTENANT THEODORE BARTLE ROOM 106	ENGIN JAMES BARR ROOM 105	PRIVATE DONALD BORDERS ROOM 105	SERGEANT JEREMIAH BROSNAN ROOM 107
ENGIN ALLEN CANNELL ROOM 108	CAPTAIN JOHN CHAFFERS ROOM 110	STAFF SERGEANT ROGER COLLINS ROOM 112	TECHNICIAN 1TH GRADE EMMETT DALL JR. ROOM 114
CORPORAL ALBERT DEPOSE ROOM 116	STAFF SERGEANT ROBERT DENNY ROOM 118	FIRST LIEUTENANT DANIEL GOODWIN ROOM 111	PRIVATE FIRST CLASS FRANCIS NEUBANK ROOM 103
REV. LEO REICHTERER, O.S.B. ROOM 101	PRIVATE HAROLD RULANDER ROOM 102	FIRST LIEUTENANT FRANK SUGAR ROOM 104	REV. JOSEPH WUNDERLICH, O.S.B. ROOM 109

St. Martin's Memorial Hall - 2nd Floor			
SECOND LIEUTENANT PHILIP REISER ROOM 201	PRIVATE NORMAN FEE ROOM 201	SECOND LIEUTENANT ROBERT FROELICH ROOM 202	ENGIN WILLIAM FROTHINGHAM ROOM 203
PRIVATE FIRST CLASS JOSEPH GARDEN ROOM 204	SECOND LIEUTENANT GEORGE GRACE ROOM 206	LIEUTENANT JR. GRADE WILLIAM HANSEN ROOM 207	FIRST LIEUTENANT ROBERT HOGAN ROOM 208
SECOND LIEUTENANT JOHN LADOU NORTON ROOM 205	PRIVATE JAY HAPPEL ROOM 210	STAFF SERGEANT ROGER KEARNEY ROOM 209	FIRST LIEUTENANT ROBERT KOSCIOLANK ROOM 212
PRIVATE FIRST CLASS MELDON NAGAR ROOM 216	FIRST LIEUTENANT NORMAN MARKE ROOM 218	STAFF SERGEANT BERNARD MCCOYDEN ROOM 214	FIRST LIEUTENANT WILLIAM MERRILL, JR. ROOM 200

The biographies are divided by floor, creating a “digital dorm” for viewers to look through.



An example of the biographies in the online display



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