

THOMAS A.
McCABE

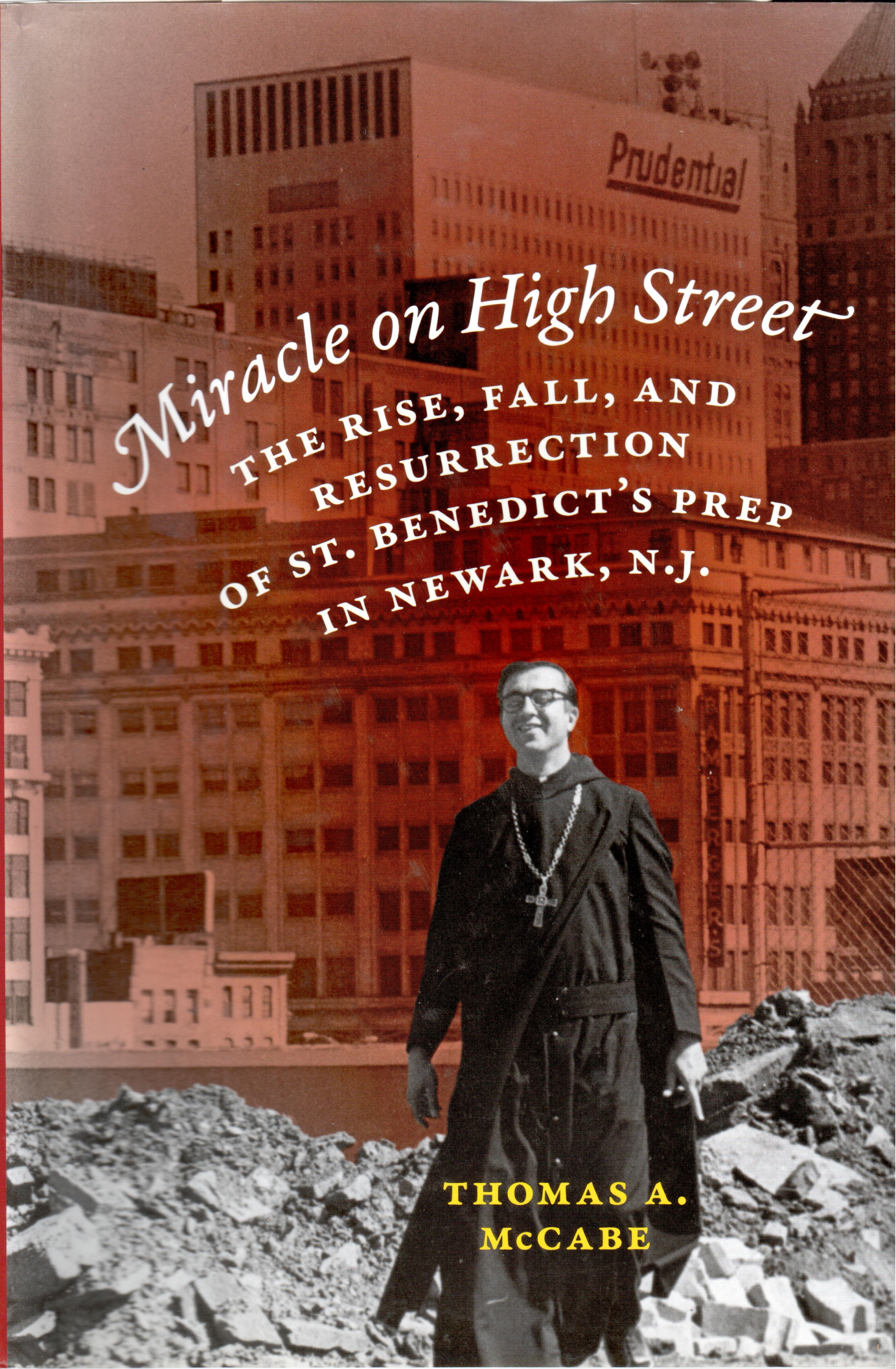
Miracle on High Street



FORDHAM

Miracle on High Street
THE RISE, FALL, AND
RESURRECTION
OF ST. BENEDICT'S PREP
IN NEWARK, N.J.

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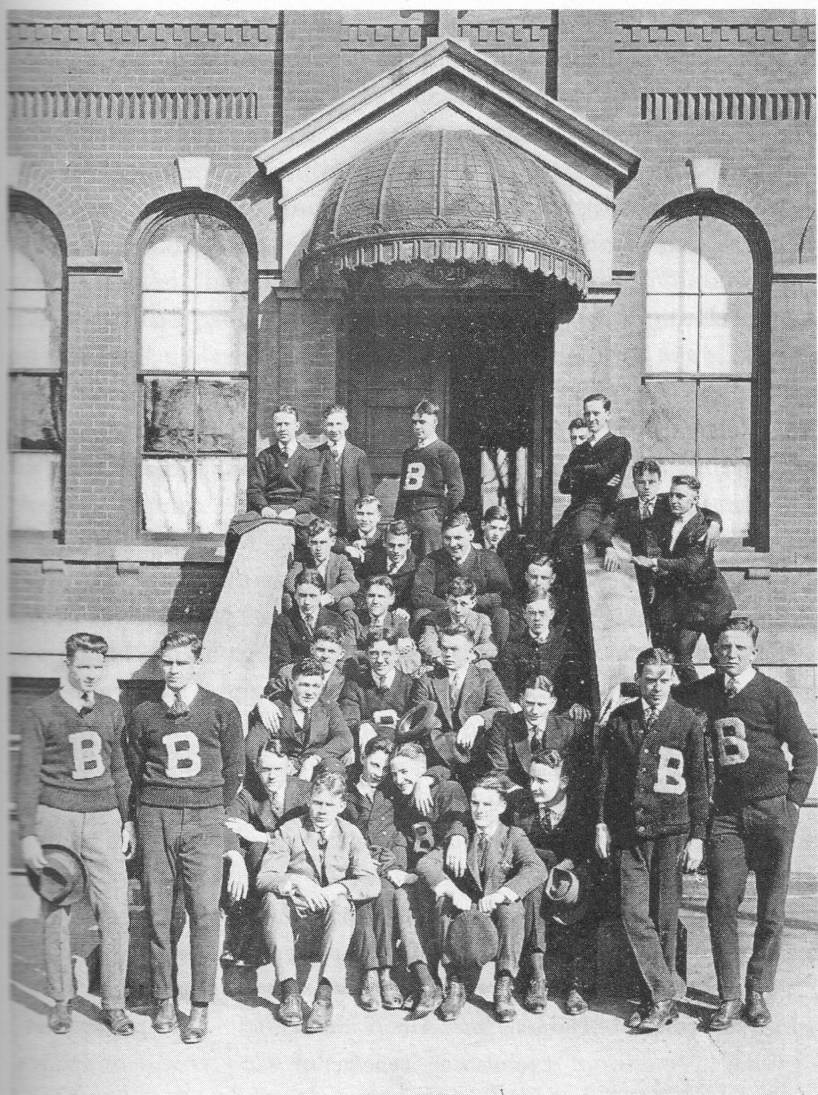


and Red Cross drives, and participating in conservation programs. Individual classes competed against one another to see who was more patriotic, monitoring and measuring their contributions to the war. One student sold more than three thousand dollars' worth of war bonds. Military training was introduced at the school too. While the Western Front's bloody trench warfare ended in a stalemate thousands of miles away, an influenza epidemic in the city proved especially deadly. It reached the doorstep of St. Benedict's and delayed the opening of the 1918–19 school year. The sophomore James Reid was among the 26,235 city residents who contracted the virus, and unfortunately he was one of the 1,133 who died before the epidemic faded in late November.¹³

News of Germany's surrender rippled through Newark prematurely, and despite the recent tragedy of a classmate's death, some students were in a festive mood. Bernard DuPlessis recollected the following in the class of 1921 history:

Several newspapers anticipated Armistice Day, and on the morning of Friday, November 7, 1918, the fake glad tidings were announced. Did we Sophomores ask whether the news was authentic or not? We did not. About fifteen of us crowded into and on Arthur Connolly's seven-passenger car and set out. It didn't take us long to find out we were playing "hookey," but little did we care that morning. We were out for a good time and we meant to have it. The real fun came, however, when we had to explain to our parents the "why" of the absentee notices.

When the real Armistice Day was announced four days later, the monks gave students the day off as they declared November 11 "Victory Day." Bernard and his pals once again set out in Art's car, "but the first day's fun seemed to take the edge off the second." By 8:00 A.M. the intersection of Broad and Market streets, popularly known as the "Four Corners," had been packed with revelers for hours. Strangers embraced, citizens sang, and bands played. The Newark Evening News headline read, "Newark Explodes in a Tumult of Celebration."¹⁴



A group of students posing on "The Stoop," the iconic set of steps leading up to the front entrance of the school, 1921.