



## Rev. Father Clifford M. Lewis, S.J.

Rev. Father Clifford M. Lewis, S.J., one of the founders of Wheeling Jesuit College, was known for his work as an educator, author, lecturer, and research analyst — as well as his dedicated efforts in behalf of his church.

The first Jesuit to take up residence in Wheeling, he arrived early in 1953 to confer with Archbishop John J. Swint and others interested in the establishment of a Catholic college in the city. He quickly learned to appreciate the community and the community learned to appreciate him. He remained a Wheeling resident until his death in 1983.

Born in Meadville, Pa., in 1911, Father Lewis began his education in a one-room school house. He went on to Meadville High School and Allegheny College, where he received a B.A. in English in 1932. He began a teaching career as a social science instructor in the Erie County school system.

Subsequently, he obtained a master's degree in journalism from the University of Wisconsin and then briefly worked as a newspaper reporter in Meadville. He later became a journalism instructor and director of publicity at West Virginia Wesleyan and went on to become director of publications at Penn State University.

In '42, he entered the Jesuit novitiate at Wernersville, Md. He was ordained a priest in 1951 and taught at Scranton University.

When Wheeling College was planned, the price tag for constructing the bare essentials was over budget by \$1 million. Archbishop Swint declared the cost too expensive for the effort to continue but the Jesuits persisted. Father Lewis was largely responsible for raising that \$1 million, as well as additional monies for the operation of the college.

After the college was established, he remained on campus as assistant to the president.

As Margaret Brennan, president of the Wheeling Area Historical Society, wrote, "Father Lewis did not isolate himself in the cloak of academia. Rather, he involved himself vigorously in the life of the Wheeling community and in the state of West Virginia. His interest in history and archeology, combined with his scholarly gifts and his writing ability, enabled him to make a difference in his world and to leave behind a legacy of publications which are still enriching research efforts. He was an educator in the truest sense of the word. He led us to a greater knowledge of ourselves and our surroundings by his own gentle wonder and his diverse teaching gifts."

Father Lewis became president of the West Virginia Archaeological Society and the Wheeling Area Historical Society. In 1968, he was appointed to the West Virginia Antiquities Commission. That same year, he launched "The Upper Ohio Valley Historical Review."

He also played a central role in acquiring federal funds for the restoration of West Virginia Independence Hall and delivered an address on its history during dedication of the structure. He served as a director of the Independence Hall Foundation.

His interest in historic preservation causes was also demonstrated by the instrumental role he played in the designation of Wheeling's Suspension Bridge as a national historical engineering landmark.