

CHAPTER VIII

XAVIER UNIVERSITY SEISMOLOGICAL OBSERVATORY

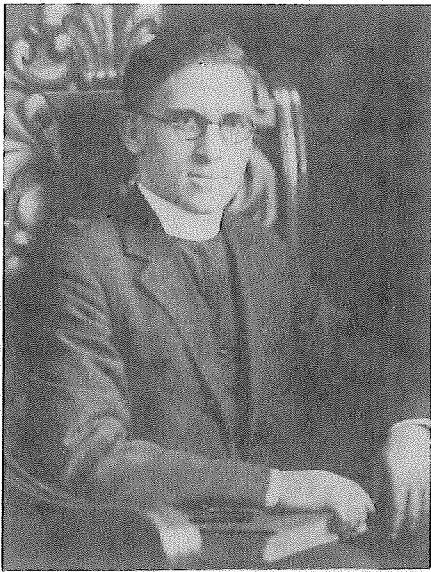
CINCINNATI, OHIO

By Victor C. Stechschulte, S. J.

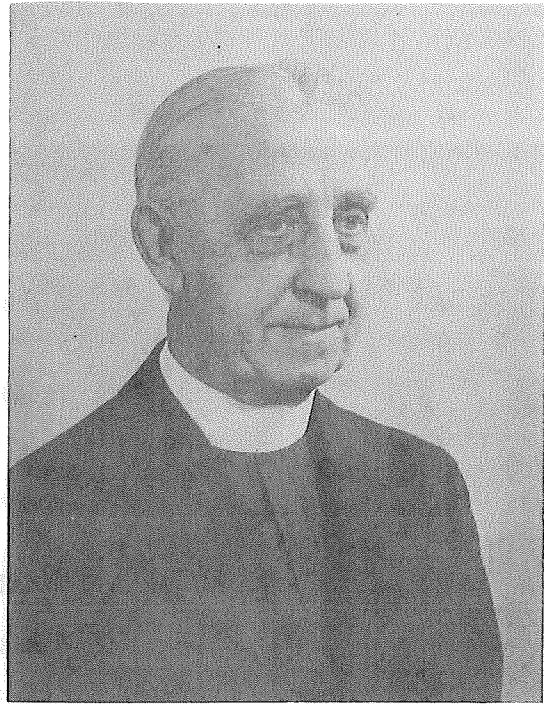
In the fall of 1925, shortly after the organization meeting of the Jesuit Seismological Association, Father Macelwane wrote to Reverend Hubert F. Brockman, S. J. President of Saint Xavier College, later to be known as Xavier University, inquiring about the prospects of establishing a first class seismic station there. A new library building was being constructed at Xavier and it was deemed desirable that plans be rushed for including a seismographic vault in the basement of the new building. Father Brockman responded with enthusiasm. A vault containing seven massive concrete pillars was constructed and orders were placed in the spring of 1926 for two short-period and two long-period Wood-Anderson horizontal seismometers as also for a Wood-Anderson vertical together with five recording drums.

The public announcement of the projected establishment of the Observatory stirred a great deal of local interest, and some financial aid was received, especially from Mr. D. J. O'Connor, President of the Formica Company.

In the summer of 1926 Mr. Vincent V. Herr, S. J., was appointed to take charge of the new station, though the instruments would not arrive for some time still. They were



Reverend Vincent V. Herr, S. J.
Director, 1926 - 1929



Reverend Joseph Wilczewski, S. J.
Director, 1929 - 1931



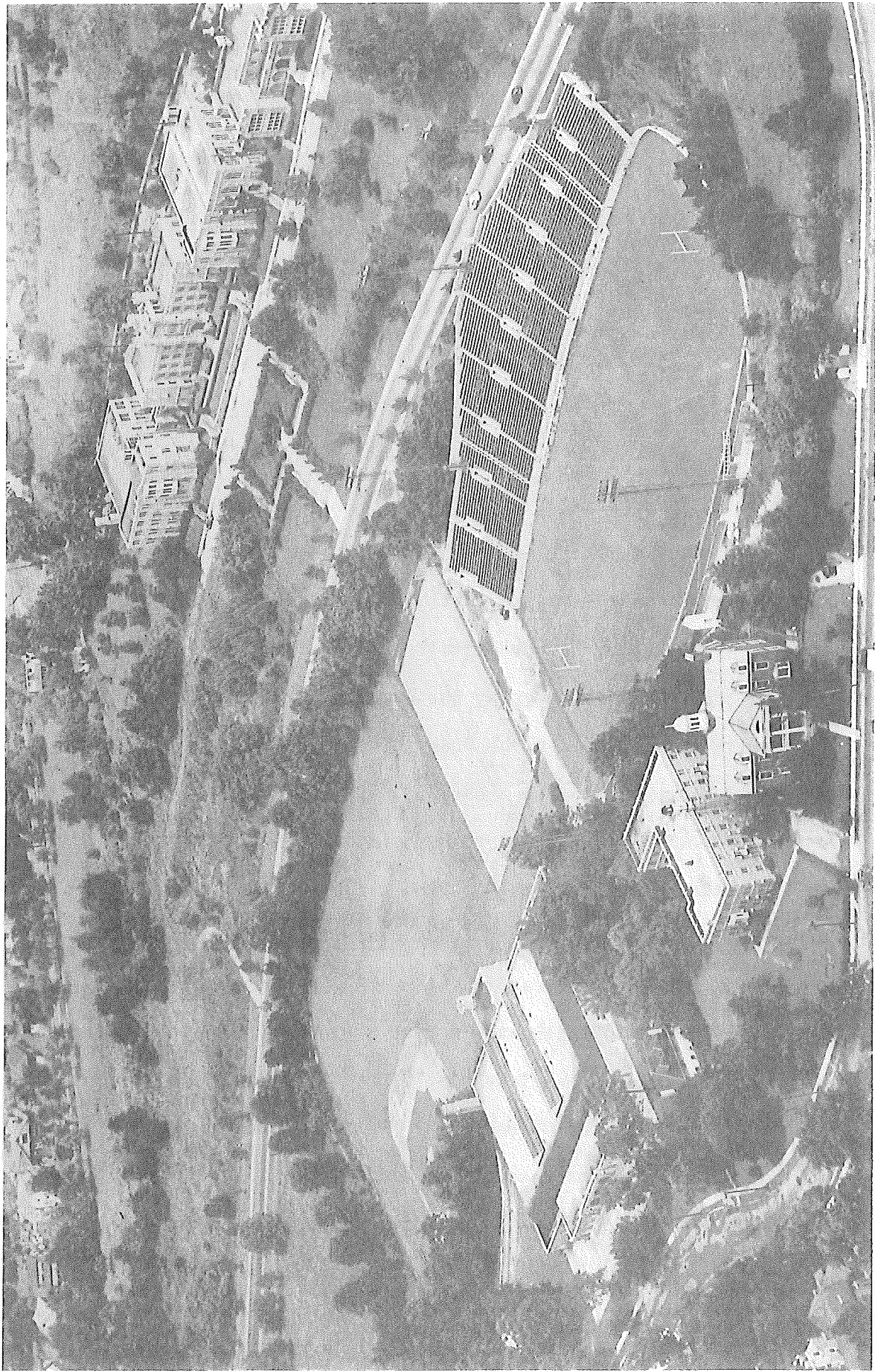
Reverend Victor C. Stechsulte, S. J.

Director, 1932 -

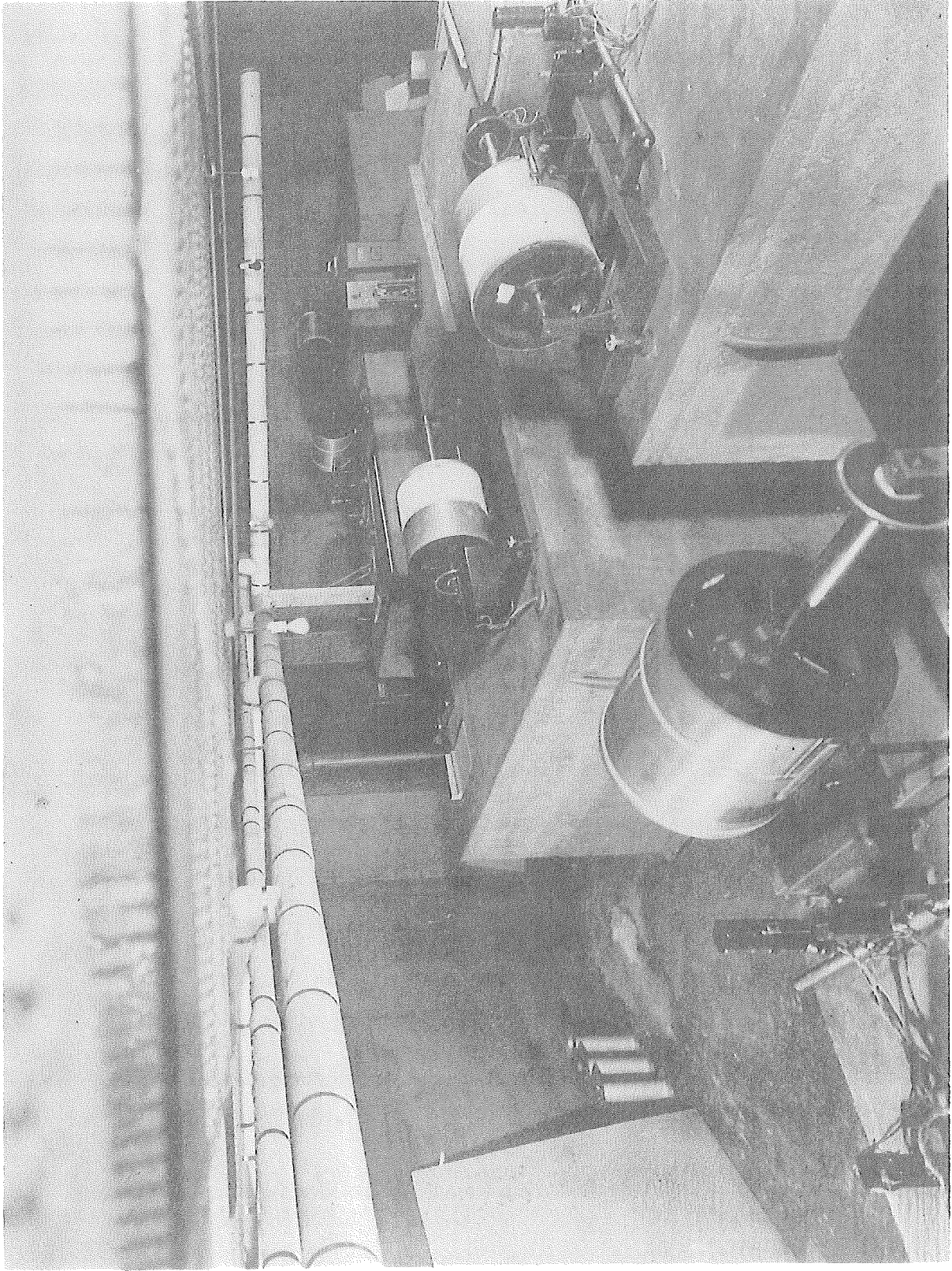
received in the early summer of 1927. Routine recording was begun that fall and the first Station Bulletin carries the date of November, 1927. A Galitzin-Wilip Vertical with galvanometer and recording drum, which had been ordered some time previously, arrived from Estonia in the summer of 1928 and was soon put into operation.

Mr. Herr continued in charge until June, 1929, at which time he began his theological studies. Care of the Observatory was then assumed by Reverend Joseph Wilczewski, S.J., assisted by Reverend Clifford J. LeMay, S.J. In August, 1931 Father Wilczewski was transferred to Marquette University and the station was inactive until February, 1932. At this time Reverend Victor C. Stechschulte, S.J., who had just taken his doctorate in Seismology at the University of California, was appointed Director of the Observatory and he has remained in charge up to the present.

The Xavier Observatory came into special prominence in connection with the two sharp shocks which shook West Central Ohio and more than 100,000 square miles of surrounding territory on March 2 and March 9, 1937. These earthquakes, which were felt in Cincinnati, caused a flood of calls from many organizations in various places for talks on Seismology by the Director of the Observatory. Father Stechschulte also spent some days in the epicentral region collecting evidence on damage done and of reports of various phenomena accompanying the two shocks. These quakes were centered at the



Air View of Xavier University - The seismograph station is located under the third building from the left in the row at the upper right of the picture.



---Photo by Norfolk and Western Railway

Partial View of the Instrumentation and Piers

little town of Anna, Ohio, where sizeable damage was done.

In the fall of 1949 some changes were made in the instrumental equipment of the Observatory, and at present four seismographs are being operated: the original Galitzin-Wilip long-period vertical, two horizontal seismometers (period 3 seconds), and a short-period (1 second) vertical. These three latter instruments, of the electromagnetic type with galvanometric recording, were constructed at Xavier and are giving good service.

Assisting in the work of the Observatory at various times there have been, among others, Reverend Henry F. Birkenhauer, S.J., now Director of the Observatory at John Carroll University; Mr. Frank Pilotte, now Instructor in Geophysics at St. Louis University; and Mr. Joseph J. O'Neill, later Geophysicist with the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey.

In 1933 Father Stechschulte was elected Vice-Chairman of the Eastern Section of the Seismological Society of America and Chairman in 1934. From 1941 to 1944 he served as Vice-President of the Section of Seismology of the American Geophysical Union and from 1944 to 1947 as President of the Section. In 1940 Xavier University was host to the annual meeting of the Eastern Section of the Seismological Society.