



Past *Forward*

PROVIDENCE ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province • Providence Health & Services

Farewell, Providence Heights

Jessica Long & Peter Schmid

In the 1940's and 1950's, an awareness was growing among religious communities and the Catholic Church that women religious required more formal and standardized instruction in sciences, philosophy, mathematics, and the arts prior to beginning full employment, usually in education or health care. Traditionally, sisters were assigned a ministry after completing the novitiate, often attending summer school to supplement their training. It could take years to attain a formal degree (sometimes jokingly referred to as "the 20-year plan").



Sr. Mary Philothea (Genevieve Gorman), SP and Sr. Mary Emil (Penet), IHM at the Heights. Both were leaders in the sister formation movement, and Sr. Mary Philothea served terms as provincial superior and dean of the college. Image #189.N6.037.

In his 1951 "Counsel to Teaching Sisters," Pope Pius XII urged excellence for Catholic schools, and was clearly mindful of regulatory requirements: "See to it, therefore, that [teaching sisters] are well trained and that their education corresponds in quality and academic degrees to

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Second International MACC Meeting Held in Montreal

Loretta Greene

In June, the Providence Archives staff and Anita Wilkins, Mother Joseph Province, director of communications, were pleased to participate in the second international meeting of staff from all the provinces whose ministry it is to share the history and charism of Mother Gamelin and the Sisters of Providence through Museums, Archives, Communications and Causes (MACC). The first meeting was held in 2014.

This meeting's theme focused on connections - among ourselves as Providence staff and with the public - and the methods, especially through the many uses of the internet, to accomplish this outreach.

The conference was opened by Sister Karin Dufault, congregational leader (and member of Mother Joseph Province), who spoke of communication and connection as mission. Her inspirational words resonated with all of us. Each province prepared a presentation on our contributions to the 175th anniversary celebration of the religious community, as well as briefer presentations on specific outreach projects since the last meeting 5 years ago. The topics shared by our archives staff were: books published using archives resources; restoration of Providence Academy, Vancouver, Wash., by The Historic Trust; historical preservation efforts at Providence Heights, Issaquah, Wash.; and the creation of exhibits for ministries, cultural organizations and public awareness.

Other than the presentations, we also heard from two individuals involved with preserving the history and cul-

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that demanded by the State.” At a meeting of the National Catholic Education Association the following year, a panel identified the three most significant obstacles to teacher training: the time required to complete degrees; resources to cover the cost of schooling; and understanding of the particular needs and problems in the formation of teaching sisters. Surveys were conducted to elicit critical financial and census data from nearly 400 congregations with teaching missions.



Everett Curriculum Workshop at Providence Hospital, Everett, Wash., 1956. Image #189.I12.001.



First group of sisters assigned to the juniorate at Everett, 1957. Image #189.N1.001.

From the beginning, it was recognized that providing formal education to junior sisters would mean delaying teachers' entrance to the workforce. Catholic schools were already pressed for lack of teaching sisters even with the old model in place, and many were required to hire lay faculty. They would have to hire more in the interim while the first cohorts of religious completed their educations.

A three-month Sister Formation Conference was held at Providence Hospital in Everett, Wash., in 1956. It was here that sisters began laying the groundwork for a new curriculum combining traditional and spiritual education.

Out of this conference, Providence Heights College of Sister Formation in Issaquah, Wash., was born.

Unlike other established Catholic colleges for women, Providence Heights was one of only two colleges created specifically for women religious in the United States (the



Early College of Sister Formation, Everett, 1960. Note tiny dolls on mobile at upper right representing the five religious communities. Image #189.N3.16.

other was Marillac College in St. Louis, Mo.). But it was more than just a traditional college. The campus was also home to the novitiate for the Sisters of Providence and the provincial headquarters for the former Sacred Heart Province. While short lived, 187 sisters would graduate from the baccalaureate program.

Prior to the opening of the Heights, the Sisters of Providence signed a contract with Seattle University in 1958 officially accepting the College of Sister Formation as an academic unit within the university. The first sisters to enroll commuted every day by bus to SU from Providence Hospital in Everett, where they resided in the School of Nursing building. This inconvenient travel arrangement for the sisters would only last as long as it would take to complete the Heights campus.

Nestled within 243 acres of wooded land on the Sammamish Plateau, the entire Providence Heights campus was designed by John W. Maloney, an architect who de-

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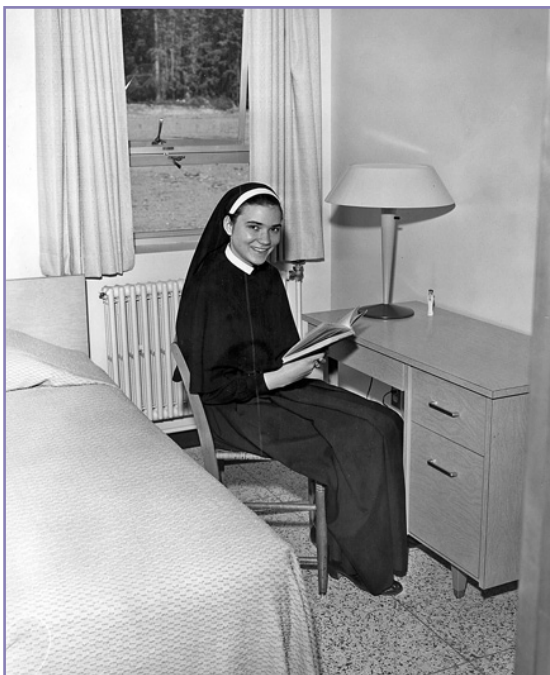
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signed numerous buildings in the Pacific Northwest. His plans for the campus, first drafted in 1957, consisted of seven interconnected buildings and several minor auxiliary buildings.

Similar to other colleges, Providence Heights offered several amenities besides classrooms and administrative offices to encourage young sisters to grow as well-rounded individuals. Students could enjoy on-campus dormitories, an auditorium, a 50,000 book library, a gymnasium, tennis and volleyball courts, and even an indoor heated swimming pool.



Moving documents to the new Providence Heights, 1960. Image #189.N1.001.



Postulant dormitory, 1962. Image #189.A12.010.

While the chapel was the heart of the campus, the 14 steeply pitched gabled clerestory windows were the centerpiece of the chapel. Created by Gabriel Loire, a world-renowned stained glass artist from France, the colorful windows soared 33 feet into the air. (For more about these extraordinary windows, see our Spring 2019 issue).



Seminar classroom and study room. Image #189.C2.017.

Communal living of students and teachers provided the traditional feeling of a novitiate within the college experience. The program took five years to complete: Postulants (first stage of religious formation) were considered freshman and novices (second stage) were equivalent to sophomores, plus they completed a canonical year of spiritual retreat and preparation. After taking vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, newly professed sisters, called junior sisters, who lived in the juniorate, would continue their education as juniors and seniors.



Sisters working in a laboratory. Image #189.C2.015.

In partnership with Seattle University, the College of Sister Formation educated young women from five religious communities from 1961 to 1969. Sister instructors (educated to the doctorate level specifically for the Heights

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faculty) offered a variety of courses, including Christian art and music, sociology, world literature, plant biology, and subjects with national and international focus.

The new campus also allowed the provincial administration of the former Sacred Heart Province and the novitiate for the Sisters of Providence to relocate from Mount St. Vincent in West Seattle to Providence Heights. This move was part of a larger plan to renovate the Mount and later build Saint Joseph Residence, which was to provide assisted living and skilled nursing care to retired Sisters of Providence.



Aerial view of the Heights, early 1960s. Image #189.K1.3.

Due to the declining number of women entering religious life and other societal changes, the College of Sister Formation closed in 1969. The Sisters of Providence continued to use the campus for their provincial administration offices, spiritual retreats, jubilee celebrations, and meetings, but a source of revenue was needed.

Fortunately, the expansive campus facilities were well-suited for use as a conference center. Over the following years, a large variety of groups would utilize classrooms and meeting spaces for workshops and seminars, such as the Renton Education Association, the State Library of Olympia, University of Washington Nursing Services, the Lutheran Church of America, the Real Estate Education Association, the Seattle King County Equal Opportunity Board, and the Department of Highways. Other activities on the conference center schedule included employee picnics, clinics for female coaches, science conferences, youth basketball camps, a Miss Issaquah Pageant, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation courses, and weddings.

One of the largest clients was the Washington Criminal Justice Education and Training Center. Police officers from across the state came for basic training, class work, and participation in mock accidents and arrests, which made the campus a lively place. Orientation courses for wives of officers were also offered. The relationship be-

tween Providence Heights and the Training Center allowed hundreds of police officers to graduate from the training program. The Providence Heights chronicles noted that “although on the surface the Sisters and the Police are greatly different, underneath they have the same goal: service to humanity.”

Despite a steady increase in the use of the Heights as a conference center, by 1973 it ran at only 50 percent occupancy. Lutheran Bible Institute leadership toured the site in May of that year with an interest in purchasing the campus, but negotiations and financial difficulties delayed the sale until 1975. The last owner, The City Church (now ChurchHome), purchased the property in 2004. The City Church initiated plans to sell the campus to a developer in 2014 and after a lengthy legal battle in which Issaquah residents and historical preservation advocates attempted to save the Heights, the sale went through in 2018.

All of the buildings on the Providence Heights campus have now been demolished, but parts of it will live on. Prior to the dismantling of the chapel, the Sisters of Providence and Providence Health & Services were granted ownership of the Stations of the Cross and the stained glass windows. Custom storage crates were built for each piece and detailed records of the work kept so someday the windows can be reinstalled, bringing their history and light to a new environment.

Want to See More? Check Out These Resources!

If you're in the Seattle area, make an appointment to come in and see our exhibit about Providence Heights here in the Archives at Saint Joseph Residence.

Also take a look at our YouTube site which includes two videos of the Heights created from original 16mm film in our collection: <https://tinyurl.com/ProvHeights>. The videos are narrated by Sr. Teresa Lang (Judith), provincial superior of the former Sacred Heart Province, 1961-1964, and later dean of the College of Sister Formation, 1964-1968. In addition, our digital collections database contains over 600 photograph and artifact records: <https://tinyurl.com/HeightsImages>.





Artifact Spotlight

Jessica Long



Last year Providence Archives scored a fun addition to the artifact collection: a co-branded soccer scarf with logos for the Portland Timbers and Portland Thorns professional soccer teams and Providence Heart Institute. For the non-fans, scarves are a must-have accessory for soccer (or ‘football’) supporters the world over. While the history of the soccer scarf is about as difficult to trace as spotting a player offsides in a game, they likely began in Britain in the 1930’s or so. These early scarves were usually handmade by mothers and grandmothers and were colorful additions to the dark overcoats and hats typically worn by fans at the time. In the last few decades of the 20th century, manufacturers started to catch on to the trend and began mass producing scarves to fill the never-ending demand of enthusiastic fans. As soccer has become increasingly popular in the United States, so too has the tradition of the soccer scarf. It’s not uncommon for team stores and fan clubs to offer multiple new designs every year.

According to the Portland Service Area chronicles, Providence Health & Services has partnered with the Portland Timbers for various events since at least 2011, including Health and Fitness School Day events, a Providence Sports Care Center, Stand Together Week, and

Special Olympics games. Providence also has been the official health care provider and primary jersey sponsor for the Portland Thorns since the Thorns’ foundation in 2013. The Timbers and Thorns’ home stadium was renamed Providence Park in 2014, when PH&S bought the naming rights to the entire stadium. Recently, four Thorns players were part of the national team that won the 2019 FIFA Women’s World Cup, representing United States (and Providence) on the world stage!



This limited edition soccer scarf, now cataloged as A-53.100, reflects perfectly both health care and charity ministries. It was only available from the “buy a scarf, save a life” fundraiser for the Play Smart Youth Heart Screenings program with all proceeds going toward heart screenings for children. These five-and-a-half foot long scarves were sold at the Providence Park stadium on September 19, 2018 or pre-ordered online through the Portland Timbers and Thorns team stores (if you’re wondering, the Timbers won 3-2 against the Columbus Crew SC, from Columbus, Ohio, at that Sept. 19 home game!). This scarf is currently the only artifact in our collection related to the PH&S and Portland soccer collaborations.



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tural contributions of religious communities in Montreal, especially communities that are reaching completion.

Our three days were packed with learning and sharing, professional exchanges and personal connections in French, Spanish, and English. We all appreciated the opportunity to be present with our colleagues from near and far, and to renew and develop personal relationships

with those whom we met at the last meeting or only know through email. It was enlightening (though exhausting!) to hear about all the projects and outreach completed in other provinces. Through our various areas of expertise, MACC staff promote understanding of the Sisters of Providence past and present, and advance their mission.



Celebrating the Apollo 11 50th Anniversary

Dolores B. "Dee" O'Hara was the first aerospace nurse to NASA's first astronauts, laying the foundation in the field of space nursing. O'Hara was the official nurse to the Mercury Seven astronauts and their families, and went on to support the Gemini Program (1961-1966), and Apollo Program (1961-1972)

- including the Apollo 11 crew which landed on the moon on July 20, 1969.

O'Hara was also a proud graduate of the nursing school at Providence Portland Medical Center, class of 1956! She visited the hospital in 1961 and spoke at convocation. Here, she greets a beaming student in the practical nursing program, and reminisces with a sister as they look at pictures of her class. Image numbers 161.D3.034 and 161.D3.022.

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