

## 2003: A Year of Providence Anniversaries

Congratulations to the following facilities celebrating anniversaries as part of Providence Services and Providence Health System!

§ 130 years

St. Patrick Hospital and Health Sciences Center, Missoula, Montana

§ 65 years

Providence Alaska Medical Center, Anchorage, Alaska

§ 20 years

Providence Extended Care Center, Anchorage, Alaska

§ 15 years

Providence Centralia Hospital, Centralia, Washington

Providence ElderPlace, Portland, Oregon

§ 10 years

Holy Family Hospital, Spokane, Washington

Mount Carmel Hospital, Colville, Washington

St. Joseph Hospital, Chewelah, Washington

Holy Family Adult Day Care Center, Spokane, Washington

§ 5 years

Providence St. Francis House, Olympia, Washington

Providence Benedictine Nursing Center, Mount Angel, Oregon



Providence Alaska Medical Center, 1939

## Historical Society Publishes Article on Montana's St. Patrick Hospital



St. Patrick Hospital, Missoula, Montana, circa 1910

In this 150th year of their founding, St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula is the subject of an in-depth article published in Montana Historical Society's *Montana The Magazine of Western History* (spring 2003). "Sisters Hospital: The Sisters of Providence and St. Patrick Hospital, Missoula, Montana, 1873-1890" takes a close look at the arrival of the sisters in frontier western Montana and the establishment and growth of St. Patrick

Hospital. Numerous examples demonstrate the relationship of the sisters and the hospital to the rugged community; how funding was achieved through county contracts, patient fees, and "begging trips"; the physical and spiritual care delivered to patients; the operation of a boarding and day school; and the demography and epidemiology of the place and time.

Medical historian Todd L. Savitt and Janice Willms, M.D., Ph.D., former director of the Institute of Medicine and Humanities at St. Patrick Hospital, used chronicles and other primary sources and photographs from Mother Joseph Province Archives, Providence Historical Archives in Montreal, Jesuit Oregon Province Archives in Spokane, and the historical society's own collections to write this intriguing history of the hospital.

Reprints of the article are available from the Montana Historical Society, P.O. Box 201201, Helena MT 59601, by calling 800-243-9900 or visiting their Web site at [www.montanahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.montanahistoricalsociety.org).

# PAST FORWARD

Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province ♦ Providence Health System ♦ Providence Services

THE NEWSLETTER OF PROVIDENCE ARCHIVES

SPRING 2003 VOL. 11 No. 1

## Superior General and General Council Pay Visit to Archives



General Councilors and the Archives staff pause to record an historic meeting in Seattle (l-r): Sister Yolande Gagnon, Sister María Inelia Muñoz, Loretta Greene, Sister Judith Desmarais, Peter Schmid, Norman Dizon, and Sister Claudette Chénier.

In early January, prior to the General Conference held in Spokane, Washington, members of the Sisters of Providence General Council and Superior General, Sister Kathryn "Kitsy" Rutan met the staff archivists and were given a tour of the Seattle and Spokane repositories. This was the first time several of the councilors saw the collections documenting the sisters and their ministries

in the West. And, it was a time for everyone to get to know each other since several of the councilors and archives staff were meeting for the first time, especially Sister Claudette Chénier, the newly elected secretary-general who supervises the General Administration Archives in Montreal. The councilors' orientation included an in-

*continued on page 3*

## Union of Provinces Merges Two Archival Collections

During the previous decade when the two western provinces of the Sisters of Providence, St. Ignatius and Sacred Heart, were deliberating on their union and the creation of a new province, the theme of their discernment was Crossing the Mountains—the Cascade mountains dividing Washington state as well as the two provinces. Since the formation of Mother Joseph Province on January 1, 2000, the archives of these two provinces, located in Seattle and Spokane, came under one administration but remained separated physically.

In the past two years, another discernment was taking place: the best way to administer the two sites in functions such as staffing, reference, research, and collec-

tion management. In order to provide greater access to the historical collections, support the inter-related histories of the two former provinces, and establish a unified archives for Mother Joseph Province, the provincial Leadership Team approved the request to transfer the paper and photographic records from Spokane to Seattle. Thus it was that another crossing of the mountains occurred on March 12 when approximately 400 cubic feet of archival holdings arrived in Seattle.

Completely filling a 14-foot moving truck, the collections were boxed and transported by the Archives staff. Included in the transfer were provincial administration

*continued on page 3*

PAST FORWARD IS PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY

PROVIDENCE ARCHIVES

4800 37th Ave. SW, Seattle WA 98126

Phone: 206-937-4600 ♦ Fax: 206-923-4001 ♦ E-mail: [archives@providence.org](mailto:archives@providence.org) ♦ Web: [www.providence.org/phs/archives](http://www.providence.org/phs/archives)  
Loretta Greene, Archivist ♦ Peter Schmid, Assistant Archivist, Visual Resources ♦ J. Norman Dizon, Assistant Archivist

## Volunteer Historian Translates Records of Pioneer Nuns

To engage in research in the early records of the Sisters of Providence, one needs a knowledge of French, the sisters' native tongue. All reports and correspondence to the community, church leaders, and family members in Montreal were written in this language by the sisters in the West until more English-speaking sisters necessitated some change in record keeping practices. Over the years in the archives, some sisters have translated selected historical resources and the staff has been able to translate materials for their own use but often researchers are not able to access volumes of other records. Getting a translator to unlock the words and meanings of the archival records has been a dream goal for a long time.

Enter Heather Trescases, a Toronto native fluent in French and willing to volunteer her talents. Since December, Heather has delved into chronicles, journals, and correspondence written around 150 years ago. She finds the task immensely enjoyable, personally and professionally. Translating puts to use her French-language skills and enhances the records' accessibility to staff and researchers. Moreover the mid-19th century is a period in North American history she is keen on studying. And then there's the Canadian connection: the linking of eastern Canada, her place of origin, to the Pacific Northwest, her new home.

"Working with such first-hand accounts is like going into a treasure box!" says Heather. She marvels at the "sisters' complete devotion to their mission, passionate beliefs, and intense attachment to the motherhouse." For instance, she notes how first they pined for home, then,

when the trains arrived in the frontier the distance between Montreal and the new territory not only seemed shortened physically but was also bridged in their minds and hearts. They no longer felt as lonesome or remote (see excerpt below).

Heather holds a M.A. in Public History from the University of Waterloo in Ontario, and a B.A. in History from Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. She also completed a one-year program in French history at the Université de Paul Valéry in Montpellier, France, and earned a *Licence d'histoire*, an academic certification. While a graduate student Heather worked as policy analyst for the Canadian federal government in Ottawa, leading her to do a thesis on the history of one of the oldest cabinet committees.



Heather Trescases

Heather arrived in the Puget Sound-area with her husband, a software design engineer, in August 2002. While awaiting a work permit, she has thrown herself into

local historical, heritage and archival communities with gusto. In addition to working two days a week at Providence Archives, she also volunteers at the Eastside Heritage Center, and researches and writes for HistoryLink.org, an online encyclopedia of King County and Washington State history.

Heather balances out her intellectual pursuits in a very physical way—through figure skating and running. Her plans for the future involve further work in history, archives, and public policy. Considering what she has accomplished so far, Heather seems to be finding treasure boxes in every endeavor.

### Excerpt from the Vancouver Chronicles

*On a voyage on the Northern Pacific Railroad from Montreal to Vancouver, Washington, 1869:*

"A few times the traveler encounters a native village, of which the numerous lodgings of buffalo skin offer a picturesque view; sometimes there are troops of carnivorous animals that stop for a few instances, within rifle shot of the route, and look with astonishment at this extraordinary machine that comes to trouble the silence of their vast solitude then, scared by the whistle of the locomotive, they resume their rapid run. For the Sisters of Vancouver the whistle of the locomotive was not as horrifying—it shortened the distances and seemed to knock down, in their eyes, the immense wall of the Rocky Mountains that separated them from their Mother House..."

*Translation by Heather Trescases, M.A.*

## Renovation Closure and Limited Access

In conjunction with the renovation and upgrade of St. Joseph Residence, the long awaited construction in the Archives will begin in September and last until May 2004. During that time, the staff will move to temporary offices within the building while archival holdings will be swathed in plastic covering as protection from damage and dust.

During heavy demolition and construction, the historical records, photographs, reference materials, and artifacts will be closed to research. At other times, historical research will be restricted because of limited access to records. Services will be provided in a timely manner based on accessibility, need, and priority. If you or your facility are planning a celebration or project requiring historical resources, please notify the Archives by JULY 31 so that your needs can be accommodated.

When the dust has settled, the Archives will have a new reference room and records processing area, increased storage space for collections, artifact display area, lighting, and office upgrades. The addition of air conditioning will provide climate control, a key component in the preservation of archival materials. We will keep you posted on the construction's progress in upcoming issues and look forward to seeing you at an open house.



### Visit...from page 1

roduction to the newly developed photograph database, records and architectural drawings of the hospitals and schools, Mother Joseph's artifacts, the Archives' Web site, segments of rare film strips from St. Thomas Home, Great Falls, Montana, and the museum displays in Spokane. The staff looks forward to assisting the General Councilors as needed and to working with Sister Claudette and her archives staff in the preservation of the Sisters of Providence history.

### Merger...from page 1

records; sister personnel files; records of schools and hospitals; and a stunning collection of photographs. The detailed filing and indexing system created by former archivists of St. Ignatius Province have been preserved for ease of access and to facilitate processing.



Loretta Greene appraises and packs the historical library which consists of class yearbooks, scrapbooks, master's theses, local and state histories, religious reference books, among others.

Much work still has to be done in Spokane. The museum and artifact collections remain there with the expressed desire to develop the historical displays in the vacated space. The artifacts will be inventoried and a database will be created. Moreover, the staff wants to know the eastside sisters better, to visit with them, and to gather their oral histories.

The consolidation of the archival collections will provide many opportunities to preserve and make known the history of the Sisters of Providence in the West. It also signals another milestone for Mother Joseph Province, reflecting how the religious community and its institutions adapt to changing times.



Norman Dizon and Peter Schmid load a truck with archival boxes containing historical records and photographs before driving it across the state.