



# Past

# Forward

PROVIDENCE ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

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

## A Repository for the Future

As a storehouse for the history, tradition, and legacy of the Sisters of Providence of Mother Joseph Province, the Archives continually faces demands for more space to keep records, photographs and artifacts for the long term. Not only that but optimal conditions have to be met to slow down deterioration of materials. Making use of historical collections as an institutional and corporate resource, as well as societal and



*Loretta Greene peers from tunnel-like rows of new shelves that will accommodate 1200 linear feet of archival records.*

### Inside

X'mas in 1856

Regal Dessert

Pics of Providence



*Researchers will have full use of the reference room including outlets for portable computers. On display are a sister's habit and historical artwork.*

scholarly, also ranks high among priorities.

The opportunity to address these issues came about during the major renovation of St. Joseph Residence in West Seattle, home to the Archives and its staff. Construction in the repository and offices began in February. Approximately 600 square feet of floor space has been added resulting in additional shelving, a records processing area, and a research and reference room. Climate control is now built-in

for a standard preservation environment.

On September 26, 2004, the Archives was blessed during a residence-wide ceremony and celebration attended by more than one hundred from the religious community, the sponsored institutions and the public. Providence Archives is more than ever prepared and equipped to document the people and works of Mother Joseph Province as the religious community heads into its second century of ministry.—ND

*More photos on p. 2.*

## Four at the Forefront

*The new Leadership Team and Provincial Council for Mother Joseph Province will begin its four-year term in January 2005. L-R: Sisters Kaye Belcher, Margaret Botch (Team Leader/Provincial), Charlotte Van Dyke, Annette Seubert. While serving the needs of all four, the Archives will be overseen by Sister Kaye. A warm welcome and congratulations to the second MJP Leadership Team!*



## Christmas in the Northwest—1856 Style

The modern Christmas season is celebrated with many personal and cultural traditions. Likewise, the early Sisters of Providence practiced their French-Canadian traditions and non-Canadian sisters soon also cherished them.

Chronicles and correspondence give us a glimpse of the Christmas traditions enjoyed by the sisters in the pioneering days of Washington Territory.

Christmas 1856 touched off a burst of many prayers of thanksgiving by the five Sisters of Providence in the Northwest. They had been in Vancouver, Washington Territory a mere seventeen days when they undertook decorating St. James Cathedral for this holy celebration. Far

from home the sisters made the Christmas observance memorable. The surrounding forest provided an ample supply for decorations such as freshly clipped evergreen branches, which filled the air with the unmistakable scent of pine. A brief account written by the sister annalist relates so simply and beautifully their first Christmas away from the loving embrace of their community in Montreal.

“On Christmas eve, the Bishop gave his carpenters the day off. They used this free time to help us get ready for Christmas. Their workbench was transformed into an altar, covered with white cotton and pine branches. The walls were covered with pine wreaths which surrounded a beautiful

painting of the Blessed Virgin. The lights consisted of candles fastened at the top of sticks. Sister Blandine and one of the soldiers from the Fort provided the music. Sister sang, accompanied by the soldier on a small harmonium.

“How impressive was that midnight Mass, where only a few people attended, like the shepherds of yore! How beautiful it was that ‘Gloria in excelsis’ was sung by our holy Bishop whose harmonious voice seemed to descend from heaven!... Never had midnight Mass had so much charm for she who is writing these pages. There was the same solemnity on the great day of Epiphany.

“Do not think that we did not know how to take advantage...  
*continued on p. 3*



Never had  
midnight Mass  
had so much  
charm.



### *A Repository for the Future* *continued from p.1*



*Clockwise from top left: Peter Schmid scanning photos for the Visual Resources database; the records processing room; Norman Dizon arranging document cases; newly installed compact movable shelves.*



## PICTURING PROVIDENCE

by Peter F. Schmid, C.A., Assistant Archivist for Visual Resources

A column highlighting archival photographs and other resources that provide visual documentation of the Sisters of Providence. Peter selects notable materials from the collection of over 50,000 photographs and relates or interprets the stories behind them. He can be reached at 206-923-4012 or peter.schmid@providence.org.

### O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum...



This 1922 photograph shows the men's ward decorated for Christmas at Providence Hospital in Everett, Washington. The beautifully decorated evergreen would not pass today's fire codes! Note the bare bulbs on the ceiling fixture, the tiled floor, and leaded windows in background. Crutches lie beside the man's chair in foreground; the man in background has his left arm in a cast.

The image was taken in the first home of the hospital, previously the Monte Cristo Hotel. The sisters purchased the hotel in May 1904. Interior renovations were completed by April 1905, when the hospital opened to the public. The elaborate, Victorian structure was supplanted by a new brick facility in 1924.



### Regal Dessert

The Feast of the Epiphany is celebrated on January 6. It is the finale of the Advent and Christmas seasons and recalls the arrival of the

Three Kings at the stable in Bethlehem. It also marks the end of the Twelve Days of Christmas that begin on Christmas Day and end on January 5. The Epiphany cake is a tradition in many western European countries. A bean and a raisin are baked in a cake and whoever discovers the bean is designated the King; the raisin, the Queen. The King and Queen are feted and they prepare a party for the next day. This traditional festivity is still celebrated in the Sisters of Providence religious community. You can make this tradition your own by adding to your favorite cake a bean and a raisin or two beans if your cake already has raisins. For a traditional Provi-

dence flair you can use this recipe from Mother Caron, one of the first seven Montreal sisters, and a culinary artist in her own right. *Recipes of Reverend Mother Caron* was published in 1878, "to aid the sisters in becoming good cooks."—LG

#### Cake of the Kings

2 cups flour  
1 ¼ cups sugar  
½ pound butter  
1 tbsp. white wine or water  
5 eggs, beaten  
1 tsp. baking powder  
¾ cup golden raisins  
crushed almonds (optional)

Mix flour, sugar and butter until a crumbly texture. Add wine, beaten eggs and baking powder. Mix well. Add raisins and optional almonds. Pour mixture into greased 9-inch pan. Scatter beans in mixture. Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes.

### Christmas in the Northwest

continued from p. 2

rage of this feast [Epiphany]. On the eve, our good Assistant, Sister Praxedes, made a cake with a bean and a raisin: fortune made Sister Joseph, the King, and Sister Mary of the Precious Blood, the Queen; in the evening, there we were erecting a throne. In the blink of an eye, the beds piled one on top of the other, we braided pine branches interlaced with banderoles, and willingly or not, the royalty mounted on the throne and scepter in hand received the petitions of their subjects...—LG

## DID YOU KNOW...Santa Claus was admitted at St. Peter Hospital?

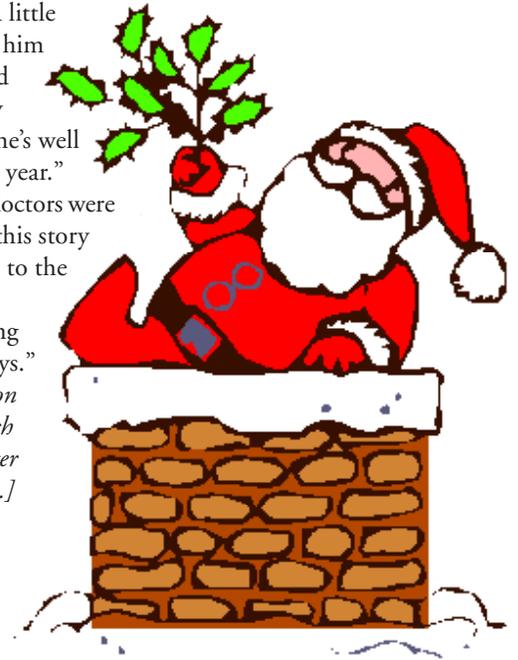
The 1923 chronicle of St. Peter Hospital, Olympia, Washington, relates a story that turns a Santa Claus encounter into a teachable moment:

“Let me tell you an entertaining incident that caused a great deal of awe among the children of the city. Christmas Eve, as usual, our lay nurses opened their gifts from under the tree amid bursts of joy and pleasant surprise, at which time one of them disguised as Santa Claus gave each one a gift and ended the evening with singing joyous carols. During the night

a windstorm hit both chimneys of our laundry room and they remained hanging on the edge of the roof. Without being aware of this, one of our employees going through the nurses’ quarters decided to play a trick on the sisters. He took the Santa Claus outfit and dressed up the training mannequin and placed it on a bed with white sheets. The news spread that Santa Claus was sick at the hospital and that the chimney had fallen because of his weight and that he was injured. This created a lot of excitement among the children who came to visit the

poor fellow. A little boy looked at him attentively and spontaneously said, “I hope he’s well again for next year.” Many of our doctors were amused with this story and explained to the children the danger of going down chimneys.”

*[Translation from the French courtesy of Sister Georgette Jean.]*



Postage

Providence Archives  
4800 37th Ave SW  
Seattle WA 98126-2793

Archivist  
Loretta Greene, M.A., C.A.

Assistant Archivist  
Visual Resources  
Peter Schmid, C.A.

Assistant Archivist  
J. Norman Dizon

Telephone: 206-937-4600  
Fax: 206-923-4001  
E-mail:  
archives@providence.org  
Internet:  
www.providence.org/phs/  
archives

*Past Forward* is published in the spring, summer and fall.  
Editing and design:  
J. Norman Dizon

*The staff of Providence Archives wishes you Peace and Joy in the Holiday Season.*