

# Past Forward

PROVIDENCE ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER  
Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province • Providence Health & Services



**FROM THE ARCHIVIST**  
by Loretta Z. Greene, M.A., C.A.

## A Reflection on Sesquicentennial Research

On December 8, the Archives staff, along with many sisters, associates, and friends, paused to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the arrival of five foundress Sisters of Providence in the Northwest. Through the sesquicentennial celebrations we are more familiar with our heritage stories about the sisters, clergy, and assistants who stepped off the S.S. *Columbia* at Fort Vancouver in Washington Territory. The visible part of the anniversary celebration focused on the three public liturgies and receptions, a commemorative calendar, an historical timeline, exhibits of artifacts and photographs, and an online chronology of the sisters' journey (see article below). From the Archives point of view, the less visible but perhaps more valuable components were the historical facts that were discovered, enhanced, or clarified through our research for these events. This was what the staff relished—the opportunity to dig deeper into the historical record, to discover new and clarify old facts, to gain a greater understanding of the sacrifices of the religious community in accepting this mission and the stark realities of international travel in 1856, and to analyze and weave together various resources for a larger picture of the sisters' journey to the Northwest and the growth of the religious

**ARRIVAL OF THE STEAMER COLUMBIA.**  
The P. M. S. S. *Columbia*, Capt. Dall, arrived at her wharf at 6 P. M. on the 7th, bringing dates from San Francisco to the 4th inst., and from New York to November 6th.  
Purser Olden furnished us with the following memorandum and passenger list:  
**Memorandum.**  
Steamship *Columbia*, W. L. Da I commanding, left San Francisco Dec. 4th, at 11 A. M.; arrived at Crescent City on the 5th, at 9 P. M., and at Port Orford at 6 A. M. on the 6th; off Columbia Bar at 1 A. M., 7th, and was obliged to lay 17 hours on account of storm; crossed the Bar at 5 P. M., same day, and anchored at Astoria for the night; left at 6 A. M. for Portland, via Vancouver.  
**List of Passengers.**  
Bishop Blanchet, Rev. Mr. Rosei and five Sisters of Charity, Rev. L. Limerick and lady, Mr. Stork and lady, Mrs. Fridenrich, G. Witworth, R. Winchester, R. Dallan, L. Snow, J. Torrence, Messrs. Washington Clinton, J. Kile, H. Elkins, G. C. Robbins, J. M. Selden, Fridenran, Rev. Mr. Hanna and lady, Mrs. Efers, Messrs. J. S. Carter, Dauenbury, C. E. Limen, and 29 in the steerage. W. R. OLLEN, Purser.  
We are indebted to Wells, Fargo & Co.'s Express and J. W. Sullivan, for files of California and States papers.

*Historical research yielded evidence of the travels of the foundresses. The announcement of their stop in Oregon on the S.S. Columbia was printed in the Dec. 13, 1856, issue of The Weekly Oregonian.*

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## A Journey Revisited

Journeys have a way of capturing the imagination because they are paths to a future. One such path, taken by five Sisters of Providence from Montreal to Vancouver in 1856, holds a longstanding place in the narrative of the religious community and its sponsored ministries. We are here because they made the journey.

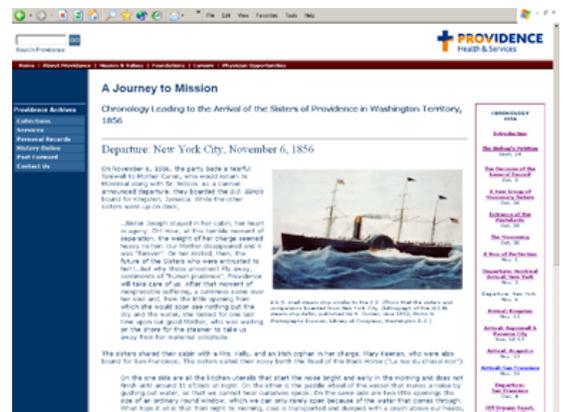
To commemorate the sesquicentennial of the arrival of the founding sisters, a Web exhibit was created by the Archives staff called "A Journey to Mission:

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Inside

1962 Storm

Anniversaries



## From the Archivist

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community and ministries over 150 years. We always acknowledged that the sisters did not operate in a vacuum, and two years of research confirmed this once again.

Our sesquicentennial research could not have been possible without the insight of Sisters of Providence who have lived the history and the assistance of local and international archivists and librarians. We always assumed that the sisters' history is documented in repositories other than ours in Seattle or in Montreal and the sesquicentennial research proved that there are many untapped sources waiting to be discovered. We are encouraged to continue our research without waiting for a celebratory event.

One of our most constant research assistants was the Internet. While it did not hold all the answers to our questions, it certainly had a great impact. There was sufficient



*Sr. Kaye Belcher carrying a portrait of the foundresses during a ceremony in Vancouver, Wash., last September. Displayed archival photographs, artifacts and historical documents made the anniversary visible and tangible.*

material to enhance our research and provide information that in earlier decades would have required time and funds for a personal visit to archives and libraries. However, nothing can take the place of the personal touch since all pertinent sources cannot be identified or studied online. Our Internet studies once again demonstrated how the research environment is shifting electronically and the value of publishing more of our inventories and resources online for public access.

So where does the conclusion of the sesquicentennial

leave us? For starters, we are taking a collective sigh of relief and catching up on archival projects and routine activities that were put on hold during 2006. Next, we will continue sesquicentennial research that needs fleshing out. And in the long term, we look forward to projects to make archival material more accessible including

processing collections for hospitals and schools from both sides of the Cascade mountains and from Alaska to California, providing web access to the database of images, and "optical character recognition" of typescript documents.

We have enjoyed sharing 150 years of the Sisters of Providence history in the Northwest with you through various formats in 2006. Please let us know if there is something you would like to know more about so we can address it in future archival publications.

## Picturing Providence

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was good: Providence Academy could be repaired and would reopen. The loss was estimated at about \$37,000, with insurance paying most of the bill. Records show the Academy's share of repair expenditures to be at least \$1,500.

As work progressed on the building, resident sisters split up and moved to neighboring houses: St. Joseph Hospital, St.

Vincent Hospital in Portland, and Our Lady of Lourdes parishioners' homes. Two sisters stayed on at the Academy along with the Local Superior, Sr. Dolorosa (Violet Dufault).

By October 24, the high school had reopened, and the first quarter extended until November 16 to make up the lost time. The old Providence Academy had weathered the storm, and 44 years and many storms later, still stands proud.



## verbatim

Any custom that sets a screen—worse yet, a wall—between me and another person, without my intending or realizing the existence of the obstruction, imperils a perhaps once-in-a-lifetime chance for me to grow beyond the present limits.

—Sister Maryann  
Benoit

*writing in the  
May 1968 issue of  
Providence Outlook  
(St. Ignatius Province)  
newsletter on changes  
to chapter meetings*

## Journey

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Chronology Leading to the Arrival of the Sisters of Providence in Washington Territory, 1856." The exhibit is a retelling of key events prior to, during, and soon after the journey made by Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart, Sisters Praxedes of Providence, Blandine of the Holy Angels, Vincent de Paul, Mary of the Precious Blood, and their companions.

To relive how the journey came to be and retrace its itinerary and significant moments, visit the Archives site at

[http://www.providence.org/phs/archives/history\\_online/journey/chronointro.htm](http://www.providence.org/phs/archives/history_online/journey/chronointro.htm)

## PICTURING PROVIDENCE

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

*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. He can be reached at 206-923-4012 or peter.schmid@providence.org.*

# PAV & the Columbus Day Storm of '62

One of the first things that people do after a big storm is compare it to others, and almost always, someone had it worse. For Oregonians and Washingtonians who were around in 1962, the windstorm that blew through here December 14 cannot help but invite comparisons to the Columbus Day Storm of October 12, 1962, still known as “the mother of all storms” in the region. The gale claimed 46 lives, downed 15 million board feet of timber and caused \$235 million in property damage.

These pictures show damage to Providence Academy in Vancouver, where winds reached ninety-two miles an hour, though other parts of the region recorded speeds in excess of 100 m.p.h. The storm began at about 5:00 p.m., as the sisters were finishing spiritual reading and were assembling in the refectory for supper. As the wind began flinging pieces of roofing to the ground, the sisters gathered in the first floor hallway to avoid any flying glass should windows begin to break (as they did at St. Joseph Hospital across the way, which lost 18 windows and had minor injuries to patients from flying glass). Power and phone soon



*Downed trees and damage to roof and balcony on west wing of the Academy.*



*Twisted balcony railings attest to the strength of the winds.*

dropped, and branches and whole trees were coming down all over the property. Retired teacher Sr. Mary Catherine McGuire remembers that the fire alarm had been set off and would not stop ringing, adding to the chaos. By 10:00 p.m. water pouring in from the roof and the broken sprinkler system began saturating the third and fourth floors. Sisters spent hours mopping and moving library

books before getting any rest for the night.

As these images attest, the morning light revealed extensive destruction. “Looking over the damage after the storm had subsided it seemed futile even to think of repairs, and we were resigning ourselves to the dramatic closing of the historic cradle of the West and our much loved home,” wrote Sr. Imelda Lambertini to Sr. Mary Berchmans (Murphy). The day after the storm, Mother Judith (Teresa Lang), Provincial Superior, arrived from Seattle to survey the damage and to confer with insurance officials and local pastors. The news

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## 2007: A Year of Providence Anniversaries

Congratulations to facilities and ministries celebrating anniversaries of their founding or of sponsorship under Mother Joseph Province! Here are some them.

120 years

**Providence St. Peter Medical Center**  
Olympia, Washington

75 years

**University of Great Falls**  
Montana

65 Years

**Providence St. Joseph Medical Center**  
Burbank, California

20 years

**Sojourner Place**  
Seattle, Washington  
**Mary Conrad Center**  
Anchorage, Alaska



*Srs. Rita Mudd, Mary Regis Dufresne and other educators from the College of Great Falls circa 1956. Co-founded in 1932 by Bp. Edwin O'Hara, the Sisters of Providence and the Ursuline Sisters, the junior college was exclusively for women during its first two decades.*

10 years

**Spokane Visiting Nurses Association (VNA)**  
Washington

**Providence Kodiak Medical Center**  
Alaska

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

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

Visual Resources Archivist  
Peter Schmid, C.A.

Associate Archivist  
J. Norman Dizon

Telephone: 206-937-4600

Fax: 206-923-4001

E-mail:  
archives@providence.org

Internet:  
www.providence.org/phs/archives

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J. Norman Dizon



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