

Past *Forward*

PROVIDENCE ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

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

Stained Glass Removed at Providence Heights

September 2018 saw the end of an era for the Sister Formation Movement in western Washington. Stunning windows created by renowned French stained glass artist Gabriel Loire (1904-1996) were removed from the chapel in preparation for demolition of the former Providence Heights campus in Issaquah, Washington. The windows were removed by Providence Health & Services



Nicholas Frei with a window section

and are currently in storage, pending installation in a new environment to share their history and light. How did this come about?

In the 1950s, the Sister Formation Conference began as a movement among women religious communities to enhance the professional lives of sisters through college education, and to ensure that they would be on par with their lay peers in the fields of education and healthcare. Providence Heights was one of two demonstration colleges in the United States. Built on the Sammamish Plateau by the Sisters of Providence, the College operated under the auspices of Seattle University and educated young women

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University Records Organized

This spring Elizabeth Russell completed processing the University of Providence records transferred to Providence Archives in fall 2017 by the university located in Great Falls, Montana (see our Fall 2017 issue).

The University of Providence originated as the College of Great Falls (CGF), a diocesan junior college for women managed by the Ursuline Sisters with the participation of the Sisters of Providence who taught selected subjects. Soon after the college's opening in 1932, the Sisters of Providence asked permission of Bishop Edwin O'Hara of Great Falls to open a teacher training school which would be a separate division of CGF. This school, known first as the Great Falls Normal School and then eventually as the College of Education, steadily expanded until it was more financially stable than the junior college. The school accepted male students beginning in 1937, and in 1939 was

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A Kind of Homecoming: From the Yellow House to Medford

Emilie Gamelin Tavernier, foundress of the Sisters of Providence, was inspired to help those in need at a very young age, following her beloved mother's example. Prior to entering the religious community in 1843, Emile experienced deep sorrow upon the loss of her husband and three children. To help her through her grief she dedicated herself to the Ladies of Charity in Montreal, a group of women committed to helping the city's poor and vulnerable. Emile took a special interest in the care of the neglected and abused elderly women. Through prayer and the generosity of a benefactor she was able to move into a larger building, known as the "Yellow House," to serve those in need. Soon two more houses were acquired. One who enjoyed the safety offered at the Yellow House was a little girl named Mary Sullivan. She had crossed the Atlantic Ocean in 1847 from Ireland with her parents and siblings to escape the Great Famine. Unfortunately, typhus broke out on the Steamer Limerick, and Mary was then the eldest of only two remaining children. Upon

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accredited to grant four-year degrees. In 1948, due to the success of the Sisters of Providence in running the College of Education, and the previous closure of the Ursuline junior college around 1942, Bishop O'Hara transferred the Board of Trustees to Sisters of Providence control. The school known as the College of Education gradually became known simply as the College of Great Falls, and grew to be a liberal arts college as well as a teacher training school. From 1933 on, the College of Education was conducted out of one building, Our Lady of Providence Hall, which was a former Columbus Hospital School of Nursing building (the hospital was founded by the Sisters of Providence in 1892). In 1960, after years of fundraising and planning, students and faculty moved onto a new campus. While the school's name has changed twice (to the University of Great Falls in 1995, then University of Providence since 2017), the 1960 campus remains the academic institution's home.



Dorm room, College of Great Falls, 1962
Photograph by Ingvard Eide. Image #190.2002-177

The records transferred to Providence Archives in 2017 represent the many boxes of historical material that were lovingly cared for and organized on campus by Sr. Marita Bartholome, CHM. After the decision was made to transfer the records to Seattle, Sr. Marita's inventory was helpful as the records were integrated into the existing record group for the university. The records are now united into a combined 52 linear feet and will continue to grow as the university's history continues. The Archives would like to thank Susan Lee, information services librarian at the university, for her collaboration in facilitating the transfer and answering questions during the work of arranging and describing the records.

Here are some highlights of the collection:

The **student body newspaper**, the *College of Great Falls Impact*, was published by the Associated Students of

CGF from 1962-1991. Like many student newspapers, it is a revealing slice of campus life and of connections with the events in the outside world.

The **Caritas yearbook** was another student publication, published between 1953 and the early 1990s. Like the student newspaper, it showcases the fashions and hair styles of yesteryear, but also provides a look at the types of activities happening during different eras as well as the idealism and preoccupations of the students in any given time.

Eleanor M. Dougherty taught political science and American history at CGF for many years, probably from 1940 to the late 1960s. February 10th was declared Dr. Eleanor Dougherty Day in Montana in 1966. She was elected to the Montana House of Representatives in 1967. Three scrapbooks in the collection contain news clippings, correspondence, political campaign items, and other documentation of her productive career at CGF and in politics. An International Relations Club scrapbook is likely connected to Dougherty as well. In addition, the photograph collection contains two albums.

In 2004, **oral histories** were conducted with former faculty and staff of CGF and UGF for a "history retrieval" project partially financed through an institutional grant from the Rhodes Consultation on the Future of Church-Related Colleges project, funded through the Lilly Endowment. The oral histories have been digitized for preservation and to facilitate access. They include interviews with many Sisters of Providence and other faculty members, many of whom have since passed away.

Genesio Morlacci made the national news after his death in 2004 when it was revealed that he had left the university \$2.3 million in his will. Morlacci ran a small dry cleaning business in Great Falls, and had worked for a time as a janitor at the university. His frugality allowed him and his wife (who preceded him in death) to save this fortune, which he bequeathed to the university because of his respect for the value of education. A small collection of photographs, papers, and artifacts of his life were also given to the university. Morlacci is a "mystery man" of Providence Archives because of some of these items, which include a pair of men's dancing shoes, publicity stills of a dancing pair (the man is possibly Morlacci), and a set of brass knuckles. Although Elizabeth researched Morlacci's past, she was unable to find details of a dancing career or why he possessed brass knuckles.

The **photograph collection**, comprised of over 3,300 prints and slides, documents the administration, faculty, buildings and grounds, student life and academic programs at the university. While a few images date from the college's early days at Columbus Hospital in the 1930s, the

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175th Anniversary Closes

The year-long celebration of the 175th anniversary of the religious community officially closed on March 29, with a beautiful Mass celebrated at the mother house chapel in Montreal. The Mass completed several days of related activities. Sisters of Providence, Providence Associates, Companions, staff from each province and other friends of Providence gathered in thanksgiving for 175 years of sacrifice, joy, teaching, and healing under the protection of Divine Providence.

Pilgrims to Montreal began with the Footsteps of Emilie Gamelin, a walking tour of the places where the foundress lived, worshipped, and ministered in Old Montreal. The tours are also part of continuing ministry formation for Providence St. Joseph Health (PSJH), so many leaders in the health system have traveled to Montreal to participate in the Footsteps, ably led by Sr. Susanne Hartung, chief mission integration officer, and Mary Anne Sladich-Lantz, VP for mission integration.

Tours of the archives and museums at the mother house were offered and showed off some of the most precious documents, photographs and artifacts from the community's history, including a one-of-a-kind daguerreotype showing Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart and her four companions taken just days before their departure to the Oregon Territory in 1856.

The Reflection Day explored Providence charism and spirituality through individual and panel presentations with time for participants at each table to share their thoughts.

Another resource should not be overlooked. Beginning in March of last year, the Sisters of Providence general administration published an e-newsletter (*Infolettre*) dedicated to introducing the 175th anniversary and exploring various aspects of the work of the religious community. Each province submitted articles and photographs to the twelve issues which contain a great deal of history. The general administration graciously allowed us to publish the newsletters on our digital collections site:

<https://tinyurl.com/Prov175th>. We encourage our readers to take a look at these fascinating history capsules!

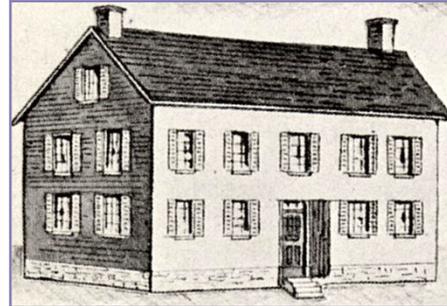


Sisters processed into the chapel with the flags of all the countries represented in the Providence community; here they pose at Blessed Emilie's tomb

Homecoming

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arrival in Montreal, young Mary was sent to stay at the Yellow House under the care of our venerated foundress, Emilie Gamelin. She remained with the Sisters of Providence until the age of twelve, when she was placed in a good home. Mary eventually married at age thirty. Now as Mrs. Klingle, she and her new husband moved west, set-



The Yellow House

ting on a ranch in Southern Oregon. Sadly, Mary lost her husband shortly after. Mary remained on the farm with their two children. When Providence Hospital was opened in Medford by the Sisters of Providence in 1911, Mary was delighted to have her "sisters" close and enjoyed many visits with the superior, Mother Praxedes. They became dear friends. Mary's children eventually married and had children of their own. As the years went on, the daughter was needed to help care for her aging mother at the ranch. But Mary would often steal away from home and come to the hospital just to be with the sisters and as she would say, "to be near our Lord." After suffering a broken leg, Mary spent her final days at the hospital with her "sisters" and fond memories of the kindness of Mother Gamelin and the Yellow House.

Stained Glass

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from five religious communities from 1961 to 1969. The campus and curriculum were designed to educate the whole woman, physically, mentally and spiritually, with the chapel as the centerpiece of the campus. Sister Ellen Elizabeth Kelly, SP, sought out modern artists whose work complemented the environment and goals of the program. Gabriel Loire also created vibrant colored mosaic Stations of the Cross which graced the chapel walls. But the main attraction was his stained glass windows.

When the sun shined through the stained glass, the Providence Heights chapel was bathed in a riot of luscious colors. Each of the fourteen triangular shaped windows, of modern-gothic design, soared 33 feet into the steeply-pitched copper roof. Seven of the windows depicted the Seven Sorrows of Mary, a principle devotion of the Sisters

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of Providence. The other seven windows depicted the Corporal Works of Mercy. Loire was a leading figure in the field of faceted glass art. This style was developed shortly after World War II but lost popularity in the mid-1980s.

The College of Sister Formation closed in 1969 due to a variety of changes in society and the Church. The campus was sold to Lutheran Bible Institute (later known as Trinity Lutheran College) in the late 1970s, which then sold it to The City Church in 2004. In the following years, The City Church initiated plans to sell the property to a developer. Locally concerned citizens and heritage groups opposed demolition of the campus for its historical significance, but after protracted debate, development prevailed. One stipulation for demolition was safe removal of the stained glass windows and mosaic Stations of the Cross. The Sisters of Providence and Providence Health & Services were granted ownership of the windows and facilitated their removal and storage, pending reinstallation in another location.

On a clear September day, Providence Archives staff had the opportunity to visit the campus to observe removal of the windows. It was heart-wrenching to see the interior chapel walls stripped to the studs and holes

in the roof where windows had already been removed. The stained glass company Emil Frei & Associates, St. Louis, Mo., was engaged by Providence to do the work. The painstaking process involved discovering the original installation plan through reverse engineering. It was discovered that steel and aluminum frames supported the windows. Each window was made of 39 segments locked into each other through a u-channel and gravity. Sections were installed from the bottom to the top, like stacking blocks. For removal, the process was reversed starting from the top to the bottom. Frei kept detailed records of the work and built storage crates for each segment. The knowledge gained from this process will be invaluable when the windows are some day reinstalled, bringing inspiration and light to a new environment.

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bulk of the photographs were taken on the current, post-1960 campus. Sr. Marita Bartolome, CHM carefully xeroxed each image, wrote descriptions on verso, and placed the copies into binders organized by subject. Peter Schmid is working on publishing many of the images to our digital collections database.

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