

# Past *Forward*

## PROVIDENCE ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

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

### **The many faces of Mount St. Joseph – celebrating 70 Years**

Pam Hedquist

It all began in 1930 when Dr. William Robinson established Rockwood Clinic, a new multi-specialty care facility in Spokane, Washington (succeeded by today's MultiCare Rockwood Clinic). Situated between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> avenue on Spokane's lower south hill near Sacred Heart Hospital, this new type of clinic could accommodate up to 60 patients. However, Dr. Robinson and many of his colleagues were drafted or enlisted during World War II and the clinic closed. Robinson decided to sell the property, which included his nearby residence.



Dr. Robinson's Rockwood Clinic, with residence at left, 1935

Sacred Heart Hospital had long desired a larger dormitory for its student nurses. So, they offered to purchase Dr. Robinson's adjoining property in 1942. But the war effort was in desperate need of nurses and the government offered generous financial assistance for new nursing schools throughout the country. The hospital took advantage of this offer and constructed a new nursing school building, therefore leaving the recently acquired property and buildings unoccupied.

Provincial headquarters for St. Ignatius Province (now part of Mother Joseph Province) had been located at Sacred Heart Hospital since 1926. Over the years visiting superior generals discussed having a separate provincial

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### **COVID artifacts take their place in collections**

Jessica Long

Hope springs eternal with the continuing distribution of vaccines against the coronavirus, and Providence Archives staff are hopeful as we transition to working full time in our offices (although both sites in Seattle and Spokane remain closed to visitors). Things have piled up on our desks while we've been working from home, and on Jessica's to-do list is a small, but growing, collection of artifacts related to the pandemic that need to be cataloged.

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### **50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of St. Ignatius Province archives**

Elizabeth Russell

This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Ignatius Province archives, founded in 1971. The archival records collected and preserved by St. Ignatius Province archivists form a significant part of the Mother Joseph Province archives created after the 2000 merger of St. Ignatius and Sacred Heart provinces. Textual and photographic records as well as extensive artifact collections represent the ministries of St. Ignatius Province and the lives of Sisters of Providence in eastern Washington, Idaho, and Montana. The anniversary presents an opportunity to reflect on the rich material from St. Ignatius Province archives and the dedication and contributions of St. Ignatius Province archives staff.

Prior to the 1970s, archival records of the Sisters of Providence community were maintained by the general administration secretariat and the provincial secretaries. In 1970, a general chapter recommendation advised study of "the feasibility of organizing an archives department, separate from the general secretariate, at the Mother House." Subsequently, St. Ignatius Province archives was established in 1971, and Sacred Heart Province archives was established in 1972, as separate departments of provincial administration.

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## 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the provinces

Peter Schmid

The Sisters of Providence reached another milestone this year with the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of provinces on March 29, 1891. Provinces are regional subdivisions of a religious community. Our local example, Mother Joseph Province, encompasses Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, and Montana.

Prior to 1891, the Sisters of Providence operated their ministries with a system of vicariates, which were similar to provinces in that they were geographic groupings of ministries, except their governance was different. In a vicariate, a sister served as vicar, and acted in the name of the general administration in Montreal. In “vicar” is the root of the word *vicarious*, i.e. acting not in one’s own name (proper authority) but in the name of another (vicarious authority). From their founding in 1856, the western missions had direct responsibility to the generalate in Montreal. In 1864, Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart was appointed the first vicar. She served in this position until 1866.

In our contemporary world of constant and instant connection, it is easy to forget that at that time, given the distance from Montreal and the length of time it took for communications to traverse the continent, it was impossible for the superior general to make timely decisions on questions from her missionary sisters. There always had to be a local authority, and prior to the establishment of the vicariate in 1864, that authority ultimately rested directly with the Bishop of Nisqually, A.M.A. Blanchet, or indirectly through his vicar general, Father J.B. Brouillet.

Erection of the provinces in 1891 was also a factor in the approval of the religious community’s Constitutions in 1900. The generalate in Montreal had been working toward approval of the community’s Constitutions for decades, after the first set of rules for the community had been published in 1858. (For a history of the SP Constitutions, see our Winter 2017-2018 issue.) Discussion of establishing provinces from the vicariates began in at least the 1880s, when six provinces were envisioned. Both the Constitutions and division of provinces had to be approved by the Sacred Congregation in Rome, as would any changes to provincial boundaries, combining of provinces, or closure (suppression) of any existing province.

Finally, in 1891 Rome approved the establishment of seven provinces. Four were located in the east: **Our Lady of Seven Dolours Province**, provincial headquarters at the Mother House, Montreal, QC; **St. Emmelie Province**, provincial headquarters at Saint Isidore, Longue Pointe, QC; **St. Charles Borromeo Province**, provincial headquarters at St. Eusebe Hospital, Joliette, QC; **St. Joseph**

**Province**, provincial headquarters at St. Joseph Hospital, Trois-Rivières, QC.

In her Circular letter to all the sisters, superior general Mother Mary Godfrey wrote that a consolidation of ministries under provinces brought the community into closer union even when it was geographically diverse, and that the new regional authorities – the provincial superior and council – would provide valuable assistance to the general administration, freeing their time for larger issues both spiritual and temporal. She described the provinces as “a new stamp of stability” for the religious community that was nearly 50 years old.

The establishment of the provinces was not without some controversy and pain. Sisters who were accustomed to gathering for their annual retreat at, say, Vancouver, may now be making retreat at Missoula, if they served at one of the ministries within the new St. Ignatius Province. These gatherings were often the only time sisters would see others with whom they made profession or served in a previous ministry. The annalist at Sacred Heart Hospital in Spokane wrote, “a very rude sacrifice was asked of the Sisters – that of the separation of Spokane from the Sacred Heart Province of Vancouver. For the missionaries the Provincial House was like a second Mother House and it was with great sorrow that they accepted God’s will in this matter...the Sisters who would be going to Vancouver for retreat would have the occasion of...a farewell to Vancouver as their Provincial House.” The distance to Vancouver mattered less to these sisters than their fondness for the cradle of the Institute in the West.

Provincial administration locations could also include the novitiate for the province, and ministries nearby could benefit from their location. The annalist for St. Joseph Hospital, just across the way from the provincialate at Providence Academy, wrote that after a large influx of patients due to an accident in 1912, “The provincial house sent the postulants to help us clean up.” In 1914 she noted that “We are fortunate to be near the provincial house and have the novices available to sing our masses.” There were likely other advantages to having direct access to the provincialate.

### 1912 reorganization

By 1912, 47 new institutions had been added by the Sisters of Providence since the provinces had been established in 1891, but most had not yet been canonically annexed to any province. This required a reorganization and therefore another petition to the Sacred Congregation in Rome.

The 1912 reorganization also assigned the general councilors as liaisons for specific provinces. Mother Marie-

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Melanie, fourth assistant, was the liaison for Sacred Heart and St. Ignatius provinces. This clarified lines of communication and authority between individual sisters and the general council. However, no sister was prevented from writing directly to the superior general with a personal problem that remained unresolved through otherwise.

The reorganization suppressed St. Vincent de Paul Province, placed some institutions from the western provinces into Sacred Heart Province, and added new ministries established since 1891:

- St. Vincent Hospital (Portland, Ore.)
- St. Mary Hospital (Astoria, Ore.)
- Sacred Heart Hospital (Spokane, Wash.)
- St. John Hospital (Port Townsend, Wash.)
- Providence Hospital (Oakland, Calif.)
- Providence Hospital (Everett, Wash.)
- Blanchet Home (Vancouver, Wash.)
- Sacred Heart Hospital (Medford, Ore.)

At the same time, two new ministries were added to St. Ignatius Province: Our Lady of Lourdes Academy (Wallace, Ida.) and St. Thomas Home (Great Falls, Mont.).

The newly-formed Holy Angels Province based in Midnapore, Alberta, assumed control of the institutions in western Canada, including the two that had been with the former St. Vincent de Paul Province: St. Mary Hospital (New Westminster, BC) and Sacred Heart School (Kootenay, BC). The ministries in Nome and Fairbanks, Alaska, remained dependent on the Mother House.

There were other changes in following years. Another reorganization in 1926 returned St. Joseph Academy (Sprague, Wash.), St. Ignatius Hospital (Colfax, Wash.), and Sacred Heart Hospital (Spokane) to St. Ignatius Province, and made the hospital the seat of the province. St. Joseph Home (Spokane), established in 1925, was also added to the province. Added to Sacred Heart Province was St. Joseph Hospital in Fairbanks, Alaska. Sixty years later, a restructuring of the eastern provinces in 1986 included remarks on the importance of the orderly transfer of archival records to the new provinces. Providence Archives has experience with such a situation. The union of the former Sacred Heart and St. Ignatius provinces to form Mother Joseph Province in 2000 was in part a response to dwindling numbers of sisters and involved the large transfer of an entire archival collection from Spokane to Seattle in 2003.

Doubtless there will be more restructuring of provinces as the religious community adjusts to new realities in numbers of sisters and in the availability of sisters to serve in administrative positions. One constant is that the community has never been afraid to change. ⇨

## The three western provinces as organized in 1891, with attached ministries

**Sacred Heart Province** (Vancouver, Washington) provincial headquarters at Providence Academy

- Providence Academy (Vancouver, Wash.)
- St. Joseph Hospital (Vancouver, Wash.)
- St. Mary Hospital (Walla Walla, Wash.)
- St. Vincent Academy (Walla Walla, Wash.)
- St. Joseph Academy (Yakima, Wash.)
- Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School (Cowlitz, Wash.)
- St. Joseph Academy (Sprague, Wash.)
- St. Peter Hospital (Olympia, Wash.)
- Providence Hospital (Seattle, Wash.)
- Our Lady of Seven Dolors School (Tulalip, Wash.)
- St. Michael School (Olympia, Wash.)

Added in 1893:

- St. Elizabeth Hospital (Yakima, Wash.)
- St. Ignatius Hospital, (Colfax, Wash.)

**St. Vincent de Paul Province**, provincial headquarters at St. Vincent Hospital (Portland, Ore.)

- St. Vincent Hospital (Portland, Ore.)
- St. Mary Hospital (Astoria, Ore.)
- St. Mary Hospital (New Westminster, BC)
- St. John Hospital (Port Townsend, Wash.)
- Sacred Heart School (Kootenay, BC)

**St. Ignatius Province** (Missoula, Montana) provincial headquarters at Sacred Heart Academy

- Sacred Heart Academy (Missoula, Mont.)
- Holy Family School (St. Ignatius, Mont.)
- St. Patrick Hospital (Missoula, Mont.)
- St. Clare Hospital (Fort Benton, Mont.)
- Sacred Heart Hospital (Spokane, Wash.)
- Mary Immaculate School (DeSmet, Ida.)
- Sacred Heart School (Ward, Wash.)

Added in 1893:

- Providence Hospital (Wallace, Id.)
- Columbus Hospital (Great Falls, Mont.)

## St. Ignatius Province archives

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On August 1, 1971, Sister Mary David Price began her appointment as the province's first archivist. Sister Mary David was a teacher for most of her life, eventually serving as academic dean at the College of Great Falls. Although she had no formal training in the keeping of archives, upon her appointment she set about acquiring an archives education, traveling to the general administration archives in Montreal to participate in short training courses on archives. Under her supervision, the archives found its first



Sr. Mary David Price, first archivist of St. Ignatius Province

location at Mount St. Joseph and began acquiring material from the ministries of the province. Sister Mary David launched a task force in 1974 to “propose guidelines to the council for the acquisition and deposition of province records and other archival material.” A letter sent to the administrator of St. Clare Hospital in Fort Benton, Montana in 1974 before its transfer to Choteau County is evidence of Sister Mary David’s proactive efforts to preserve the history of the province. She wrote, “Let nothing be discarded, given away, sold at auction or otherwise, until we have a chance to see whether or not such items should become part of the St. Ignatius Archives or museum.” Artifacts appear in the list of items to be evaluated (she asks: “Does anyone have a roll top desk?”). Like many archivists, Sister Mary David wished for more space to do her work and to store collections. A letter from St. Ignatius Provincial Sister Mary Michelle Holland indicates that Sister Mary David had requested 5,000 square feet; instead, due to lack of space availability at Mount St. Joseph she was allotted a few different rooms in 1975 to piece together for her work. The main space had formerly been a large guest dining room on the first floor, the windows of which were

sealed and blacked out to create a cooler, low-light environment for the collection.

Before she could fully realize her plans for the archives, Sister Mary David died in 1976 after a long illness. Fortunately her blood sister, Sister Anselma Mary Price had collaborated with her in the archives, traveling with Sister Mary David to attend an archives workshop in Philadelphia in 1975. Her involvement in the archives led to the Provincial Council appointment of Sister Anselma Mary as provincial archivist in August 1976.

Sister Anselma Mary had previously worked as a teacher and librarian. For her new position, she attended a training workshop on religious archives in Toronto. She served as archivist until she retired in 1988. As Sister Helen Mason noted in Sister Anselma Mary’s necrology, this sister “had training and experience as a librarian, so she was well-qualified for a position which required detailed work and orderliness.”

After Sister Anselma Mary’s retirement, interim archivists Sister Margaret Bischoff and Sister Anne Marcelle Lemay took the helm. Sister Anne Marcelle served for three years and was responsible for organizing, cataloging and accessioning material when a move to a new space in December 1988 precipitated the downsizing of the collections, a challenging event for any keeper of history. The Price sisters’ involvement continued with the appointment of Sister Barbara Marie Price as part-time assistant archivist in 1993. Sister Barbara Marie was the twin sister of Sister Anselma Mary. Although all the names of the sisters who assisted archivists and contributed to the archives over time cannot be listed here, here are a few major contributors: Sister Jane Dufault worked for more than twenty years with scrapbooks and newspaper clippings; Sister Claire Bouffard assisted with information requests; Sister Marion Larrowe and Sister Jo Anne Jelinski, RNDM both served as assistant archivists.

Sister Anne Marcelle Lemay retired in 1993, and that year Sister Margaret LaPorte was named archivist. She had previously served as historian for the province. Sister Margaret’s histories are still used as secondary sources on the St. Ignatius Province ministries. In 1995, Sister Helen Mason became archivist in addition to serving as provincial secretary. Sister Helen was previously involved in the work of the archives due to her position as provincial secretary and supervisor of the archives. We owe much to Sister Helen for her painstaking work compiling lists of the sisters who served at every ministry in the province; archives staff still use these lists today. Like Sister Marga-

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## St. Ignatius Province archives

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ret LaPorte, Sister Helen also wrote histories of ministries in the provinces that maintain their value into the present.

In 2003, after another transition with the creation of Mother Joseph Province, the textual and photographic collections were moved from Spokane to Seattle. The extensive artifact collection remained in Spokane, and the bulk of Sacred Heart Province artifacts traveled east to form part of a consolidated artifact collection. Today, Jessica Long's cataloging work has enabled researchers to view photographs of many of these artifacts online.

The archivists of Mother Joseph Province continue to work with the collections of St. Ignatius Province and make new discoveries. This is possible due to the efforts of archives staff and volunteers of the former province. This year, we renew our gratitude for their hard work.↔

Here are just a few of the many historical collections from St. Ignatius Province that Sister Mary David and her successors preserved as a testament to the work of the province's sisters.

### Early records of St. Ignatius Mission

It is fortunate that these records were saved, since many records from the mission were destroyed in the fires that unfortunately occurred throughout the mission's history. Includes photographs of mission foundress Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus and Native American families.

### St. Thomas Home, Great Falls, Mont.

Papers, photographs and artifacts document this orphanage which filled a dire need for children's social services in Montana. The ministry continues today as St. Thomas Child and Family Center.

### Sacred Heart Academy, Missoula, Mont.

As provincial seat (1891-1926) and boarding school for many years, the records of Sacred Heart Academy are a treasure.

### Sacred Heart Medical Center, Spokane, Wash.

As it is a current ministry, the records of this hospital founded during Mother Joseph's lifetime continue to grow. They include the records of the school of nursing.

### Personal papers of Sister Mary Trinitas Morin

This small collection is a complement to the much larger collection on this sister artist which is housed, along with the majority of her artwork, at the University of Providence's Galerie Trinitas.

## Mount St. Joseph

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administration building and facility for elderly and ailing sisters. Finally, with permission from the general administration in Montreal, Mother Brendan, provincial superior of St. Ignatius Province, purchased the old Rockwood property from Sacred Heart Hospital on February 10, 1951.

A two-story structure was built connecting Dr. Robinson's residence to the clinic. The complex consisted of forty-one rooms for sisters; a kitchen and refectory; provincial offices on the lower floor and a chapel on the upper floor of the new wing. The first Mass was celebrated on October 18, 1951. Mount St. Joseph, named after St. Joseph, a patron of the community, became the 179<sup>th</sup> establishment of the Sisters of Providence with Sister Barbara Baima as the first local superior.

Within four years the need for more space became evident. In 1955 a five-story east wing was added to include new offices for provincial administration, more bedrooms, a larger chapel, new infirmary, kitchen, dining room and library.

Over the next 66 years many renovations were made, including a new entrance and three-story addition in 1988. In 1991, offices were added for Providence Services, a new governing structure for St. Ignatius Province ministries.

During 2012-2013, due to the decline of sisters at Mount St. Joseph, the Leadership Team of Mother Joseph Province decided to move the remaining sisters to St. Joseph Residence in Seattle. The building was sold to Providence St. Joseph Health, but provincial administration still has a few staff working there, including two archives staff. The bulk of the archives' artifact collection is also housed there. The rest of the building is occupied by a few sisters' offices and a small library and Providence St. Joseph Health staff. Soon a new tenant, Unified Care Systems (adult residential program) will be moving to the fourth floor, the former sisters' infirmary.↔

## COVID artifacts

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The most common objects in the collection are also the most familiar tools to fight the pandemic - masks! Donated items include colorful fabric masks handmade by Sisters Felma Cerezo, Hong Nga Nguyen, Houng Thi Nguyen, and Pauline Lemaire, as well as medical masks like those given to sisters and staff at Saint Joseph Residence (SJR) and Providence Mount St. Vincent (PMSV). More unique artifacts include: a face shield made by Providence corporate office caregivers in Renton, Wash. during the beginning of quarantine when personal protective equipment was in short supply; a black t-shirt printed with "Essential Mount Worker" in white that is the only object specifically representing those unable to work from home; and various COVID-19 test swabs, complete with instruction booklets, from PMSV which show an interesting evolution in testing techniques over time.

Probably the most exciting artifacts are those related to the vaccines themselves. While COVID-19 vaccines are still in high demand, these objects are both difficult to obtain and tightly controlled (for good reasons). Recently however, the pharmacy department at Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center in Spokane graciously donated a translucent corrugated plastic box used for storing the

Pfizer vaccine! If there are any star artifacts in this COVID collection however, they are arguably the few empty Moderna COVID-19 vaccine vials received specially from SJR. These precious glass containers stored inside their original box are particularly significant because they are the actual vials used by nurses to give the sisters at SJR their second doses! Photographs of the event, vaccine record cards, and "I got my Covid-19 vaccine!" pinback buttons were also donated and help to completely document this unique moment in time.

If you have any COVID-related artifacts which relate specifically to either the Sisters of Providence or a Providence-sponsored ministry that you are interested in donating, please email or call us at the contact information below. ⇨



Postage

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

*Archivist*  
Loretta Zwolak Greene

*Visual Resources Archivist*  
Peter Schmid

*Associate Archivist*  
Elizabeth Russell

*Assistant Archivist-Technical*  
Pam Hedquist

*Artifact Collections Curator*  
Jessica Long

Telephone: 206.937.4600  
Fax: 206.923.4001  
E-mail: [archives@providence.org](mailto:archives@providence.org)  
[www.providence.org/phs/archives](http://www.providence.org/phs/archives)

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