

Past *Forward*

PROVIDENCE ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

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

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Archives Mystery Solved: Missing Film Found

Peter Schmid

Many people who attended or taught at Providence Academy in Vancouver remember the 1956 celebrations commemorating the centennial of the Sisters of Providence arrival in the Pacific Northwest. In honor of the event, Sister Cecilia Mary (Kucera), choir and music teacher, and director of the centennial committee, wrote an a cappella musical drama entitled “The Land of Loo-et.” The piece tells the legend of the Klickitat maid Loo-et, and of the arrivals of Catholicism, and the Sisters of Providence (“black-gowned strangers”) to the west. The drama was presented at the Washington State School for the Deaf auditorium on May 8 and 9, 1956.

Providence Archives has always held the program, origi-

nal script, a few photographs and other materials relating to the play, including a film contract (search “Land of Loo-et” on our digital collections database, providencearchives.contentdm.oclc.org). The whereabouts of the film remained a mystery, and in an interview with then-archivist Sister Rita Bergamini in the 1970s, Sister Cecilia Mary said that the film was never made.

We are happy to report that the film does in fact exist! As part of a film digitizing effort (more about that in a future issue), I was searching for any and all film in the archives, and came



Still image from the “The Land of Loo-et” film.

across two reels of 16mm film marked “from Dev[elopment] Office 11-16-82,” which proved to be the elusive “The Land of Loo-et,” filmed by Henry Portin in Lewisville Park in Vancouver, Washington, on May 10, 1956. View the color, 58-minute film in five parts on the Providence Archives YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/ProvidenceArchives>.

Mayday Mayday Mayday: Preparing for Disaster

Every year, Heritage Preservation—a public policy organization dedicated to preserving the cultural, historic, and scientific heritage of the United States—encourages cultural organizations to

set aside May 1st to participate in MayDay. MayDay’s tagline: “Do One Thing for Emergency Preparedness” reminds all of us about the importance of being prepared for disasters by planning ahead.

Though disaster planning isn’t the most glamorous part of an archivist’s job, it is vitally important as the papers, objects, and photographs (among other materials) that we care for in the archives are irreplaceable; these materials could be lost forever if a disaster were to occur.

Recognizing the importance of being prepared, Providence Archives was a charter member of the Seattle Heritage Emergency Response Network (SHERN) when it was founded in 2010. SHERN is a collaborative network of archives, libraries, museums, and records management programs in King County that have agreed to help each other respond to emergencies.

This MayDay, Providence Archives staff will be reviewing and updating their disaster plan!

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PREPAREDNESS PROTECTS OUR HERITAGE



SP Spotlight: Solange Schiller

*Emily Hughes Dominick
Associate Archivist*

This year Providence Alaska Medical Center in Anchorage will celebrate the 75th anniversary of its foundation. In honor of this milestone, this SP Spotlight focuses on Sister Solange Schiller who was missioned in Anchorage for three decades.

Sister Solange was well loved in Alaska. So well loved, in fact, that when a friend tried to order flowers for her 50th jubilee celebration, the florist had to apologize for running out of flowers stating:



Sister Solange visiting a patient at Providence Hospital, Anchorage, 1971. Photographed by Dolores D. Roguska. Image #160.D8a.12

“Sister Solange already has all the yellow roses that are to be found in Anchorage.”

Born and raised outside of Montreal, Sister Solange entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Providence in 1918. The following year she made her first vows and moved to Seattle where she entered nursing school. She aspired to become a nurse and practice her trade in a far-away



Name in Religion:
Solange
Given Name:
Marie Josephine
Number in Religion:
2639
Date of Birth:
1898
Entrance to Novitiate:
1918
First Profession:
1919
Date of Death:
1980

mission. She got that wish when, after working several years as a nurse in Washington, she was missioned for Alaska. Arriving in 1940, the better part of her first six years in the state were spent at St. Joseph

Hospital in Fairbanks. She then spent the next 30 years in Anchorage. Over the years, Sister Solange served in many capacities including time as a nurse, as local councilor, assistant superior, sacristan and vocation director.

Despite being physically far from her roots in Montreal, Sister Solange felt quite

at home in Alaska and was embraced by the Alaskans. She was at times called “an Alaskan institution” and was known to patients and coworkers at Providence Hospital, Anchorage, as “The Angel of Mercy.” Outside of the

hospital, she made a point of meeting with local families.

It was hard for Sister Solange to retire and finally leave Alaska in 1975. She happily returned for a celebration in her honor the following year when a small chapel was dedicated and named after her (see photograph below.) She passed away quietly at Saint Joseph Residence (Seattle) in 1980 at the age of 82. The portrait of Sister Solange still hangs in Anchorage at the Providence Regional Building inside the Café Solange.



Sister Evelyn Bergamini and Sister Solange with Archbishop Francis T. Hurley at the entrance of the chapel newly dedicated to Sister Solange, Providence Hospital, Anchorage, 1976. Photographed by Kenneth G. Kard (Focus Foto). Image #160.D91.1

Picturing Providence: Archives in the Movies

Peter F. Schmid

A column highlighting archival materials that provide visual documentation of the Sisters of Providence.



Still from "Smoke Signals" (ShadowCatcher Entertainment, 1998), directed by Chris Eyre, screenplay by Sherman Alexie.

This issue's "Picturing Providence" is a bit unusual because I'm including something from outside of the Providence Archives collections.

A few weeks ago I was watching one of my favorite movies for about the third or fourth time, when I noticed a familiar building appear for just a second or so on the screen about seven minutes into the picture.

Above is a still image from "Smoke Signals," a 1998 film about two young men from the Coeur D'Alene Reservation in Idaho and one of the men's struggle to reconcile his troubled relationship with his estranged father, who has just died. The film moves between the boys growing up on the reservation in the 1970s, and the present.

In the scene above, Victor Joseph (left, played by Cody Lightning) and Thomas Builds-the-Fire (played by Simon Baker) stand on a field below Mary Immaculate School, which

shows clearly in the background! Though nothing is actually said about the school, it's gratifying to see a Providence ministry in a movie, and I think the filmmaker's choice to include it speaks to the importance of Mary Immaculate School in the history of DeSmet and the reservation.

For comparison, below is a hand-tinted photograph of Mary Immaculate School taken in the 1930s.

Mary Immaculate School was founded by the Sisters of

Providence in DeSmet in 1878. The Jesuit mission had been established there the previous year, when they moved from the original site at Cataldo. The Jesuits taught the boys but needed sisters to teach the girls, so the Sisters of Providence responded, sending three sisters to establish the school. In an all too familiar series of events, the first convent and school was partially destroyed by fire in 1881. A new academy, completed the following year, burned in 1908. The 1908 brick-faced structure shown here lasted through the school's closure in 1974.

Finally, in the early morning hours of February 3, 2011, the old school burned to the ground. Worse, the remains of a young man were discovered in the rubble. Though the school had been closed for a long time, the destruction of the building was painful to many in the community who had attended the academy, and also to Sister Dolores Ellwart who had ministered at the school for decades beginning in 1965.



Mary Immaculate School, DeSmet, Idaho, 1930s. Image #59.E4.58

2013: A Year of Providence Anniversaries

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING *FACILITIES CELEBRATING ANNIVERSARIES AS PART OF PROVIDENCE
HEALTH & SERVICES!*

140 years

☞ St. Patrick Hospital and Health Science Center, *Missoula, Montana*

75 years

☞ Providence Alaska Medical Center, *Anchorage, Alaska*

50 years

☞ Providence Regina House, *Seattle, Washington*

25 years

☞ Providence Centralia Hospital, *Centralia, Washington*

☞ Providence ElderPlace, *Portland, Oregon*

20 years

☞ Providence Holy Family Hospital, *Spokane, Washington*

☞ Providence Mount Carmel Hospital, *Colville, Washington*

☞ Providence St. Joseph Hospital, *Chevelab, Washington*

☞ Providence Mount Carmel Hospital, *Colville, Washington*

☞ Providence Adult Day Health, *Spokane, Washington*

5 years

☞ Providence Tarzana Medical Center, *Tarzana, California*



Sisters of Providence inspecting construction progress with Bishop J.R. Crimont, Providence Hospital, Anchorage, 1938. Image #160.D23.5

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