

PROVIDENCE ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

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

In honor of the 175th anniversary of the foundation of the Sisters of Providence (1843-2018), the Archives staff took a look back at how the Sisters celebrated anniversaries in the past. In this issue we examine celebrations of the 125th (1968) and 150th (1993) anniversaries of the religious community. We hope you enjoy these essays along with images from Providence Archives collections. Small historical exhibits on the anniversaries are on display at Providence Archives, Seattle; Providence St. Joseph Health office, Renton; and Mount St. Joseph, Spokane.

Responding to Change: The 125th and 150th Jubilees

Peter Schmid

In 1968, the Sisters of Providence were a far different community than during the last anniversary celebration in 1943. In those 25 years, the world had changed dramatically: World War II had ended, but the Cold War and a proxy war in Vietnam were in full swing. The struggle for civil rights confronted long-simmering racial and economic injustice, and was often met with violence.

A changing world required a response from the whole body of the Catholic Church. In addressing how the Church would respond to modernity, the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II, 1962-1965) made enor-

mous changes to the liturgy of the Catholic Church and the role of the laity, as well as to religious community life. These changes took time to implement, but by 1968, Sisters of Providence no longer had to use their assigned name in religion, and could instead revert to their baptismal name or even hybridize the two; wore a modified, more practical habit introduced in 1966; and developed an *ad experimentum* revision to their Constitutions in response to the changes required by Vatican II. The community had transformed from one in which sisters held most positions in the institutions to one

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Eustace Ziegler Paintings Restored

Loretta Greene

Providence Archives sometimes assists the religious community with finding new homes for artwork, statues, and religious/liturgical items in the community's possession, or helps find a professional conservator to clean or repair the objects.



Eustace Ziegler, "Breaking Bread at Emmaus"

Three such items were wrapped in brown paper and stored in cardboard boxes in the storage room in one of the sisters' residences in Seattle: religious paintings by prominent Northwest artist Eustace Ziegler (1881-1969). These paintings formerly hung in the sisters' convent at Providence Hospital, Anchorage, Alaska, and it was thought that they were sold, so it was a surprise to rediscover them in 2013. We consulted with sisters who had lived at the convent as well as hospital administrative staff, but were unable to get additional information about the provenance of the paintings.

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Like our new look?

In an effort to make our newsletter a little easier on the eyes, we're trying several new fonts in this issue (in fact, you may recognize them from the Mother Joseph Province newsletter, "Caritas"). We have also increased our body copy font size and minimized the use of italics. Please let us know what you think!

Change

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that employed 21,000 lay men and women in the United States and Canada. At the same time, the number of professed sisters had already reached its apex during the centennial anniversary in 1943 (3,474 sisters) and had begun to decline – there were 3,300 sisters in 1968.

Across the Sisters of Providence religious community, celebration of the 125th anniversary was much more subdued than that of some previous anniversaries. The *Circulars of the Superior General* and the community newsletter, *Little Journal of Providence*, acknowledge the anniversary, and there are the usual recognitions of the founders of the community, but one does not find extensive passages on the history of the community, nor plans for *triduum* (three-day) celebrations.

This is not to say that the anniversary was ignored. A novena (nine consecutive days) of Masses asking for the glorification of Mother Emilie Gamelin culminated on the anniversary date of March 25 at the Mother House in



Montreal, with the prayer recited at her tomb by all present. The superior general and councilors dined with the rest of the sisters, and the novices sang a brief song for the occasion. Two of the sisters portrayed Mother Gamelin and Bishop Ignace Bourget, one dressed in the gray habit of 1843 and the other donning a bishop's violet soutane and red skull cap. The two historic characters then went to the infirmary and surprised the sick sisters with a visit.

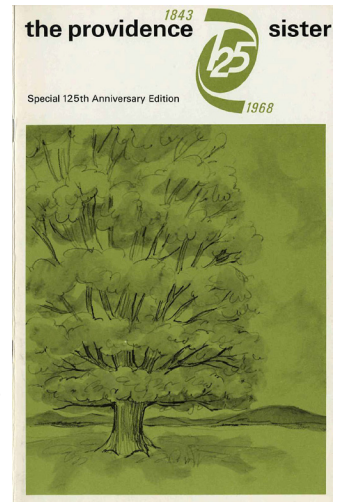
Perhaps the most important (and long-lasting) tribute to the anniversary was the installation of a life-sized statue of Mother Gamelin at the Mother House on April 30, 1968. The commissioned piece was sculpted in Italian granite by Urbano Buratti, the same artist who created the "Pieta" surmounting Mother Gamelin's tomb. The statue was dedicated on May 10, and still stands outside the Mother House.

In the West, there was no formal recognition of the anniversary besides a special issue of "Providence Sister," a periodical produced by the former Sacred Heart Province based in Seattle, Wash. In her introduction to the issue, provincial superior Sister Cecilia Abhold (Mother Mary Loretta, pre-Vatican II) looks forward and in some ways echoes the aims of Vatican II: "I feel that the real value of an anniversary observance depends upon the celebrants using this nostalgic recall of the 'good old days' as an aid in planning to move toward greater tomorrows in a union of revitalized understanding of common purpose." In further evidence of looking outward and engaging with the world, she cites a phrase from a Newsweek cover story, saying "we want you to know of our own 'joyous revolution.'" After a brief recount of early community history, the rest of the issue is devoted to the current ministries in the province, including "special apostolates" such as parish work. The issue goes on to explain the implementation of the huge changes to religious life and governance: many decisions which previously required appeal to the general council were now made at the provincial level; and for the first time sisters in the local houses were empowered to select their own superior rather than have one appointed. The sister formation process now took into account individual, cultural and regional differences, and shared more responsibility throughout the community.

While not all Sisters of Providence, nor indeed all Catholics, embraced the changes made by Vatican II, the community emerged stronger, if smaller, with renewed focus on its charism.

By the 150th anniversary in 1993, the religious community had reduced in size dramatically: the number of professed sisters, 1,596, was less than half of what it had been in 1968. Still, the community was vibrant and on December 23, its foundress Emilie Gamelin was declared venerable (the second step to sainthood) by Pope John Paul II. The city leadership of Montreal recognized the anniversary with the designation of a park in the Latin Quarter as Place Emilie Gamelin.

The official celebration opened on July 31, 1992 at the Mother House, immediately following a general chapter. A special exhibit at the Mother House featured archival images from the various provinces, including Bernarda



Artifact Spotlight

Jessica Long

What do a pair of beaded moccasins, a needlecraft model of a train depot, a souvenir cream pitcher, and a marble paperweight all have in common? They were four of the 18 objects carried by Sisters of Providence and Providence Associates in a procession of gifts at Sacred Heart Church, Spokane, Washington on March 20, 1993. The procession was part of a special Mass in St. Ignatius Province celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Sisters of Providence community.

This collection of artifacts is extra special because all but two of them are preserved in Providence Archives! The majority of this diverse selection of objects were chosen to represent the various institutions founded across St. Ignatius Province. For example, the beaded moccasins represented Native American students at Mary Immaculate School in DeSmet, Idaho; the train depot model represented Providence Hospital in Wallace, Idaho (which stood very near the tracks); the cream pitcher was from St. Vincent Academy in Walla Walla, Wash.; and the paperweight was from the College of Great Falls (now University of Providence) in Montana. Some artifacts in the proces-



sion stood for other aspects of the Sisters of Providence community, such as a wooden tray from the Philippine Sector and a candle shaped like the Earth, which represented the Sister's relationship with one another and with all of creation. The objects not in our collection are a stained glass depiction of Mother Emilie Gamelin titled "The Fruit of Her Hands" by Sister Carol Marie Morin, created in memory of her cousin Sister Mary Trinitas Morin, (now at Galerie Trinitas, University of Providence, Great Falls); and a 1927 copy of Lucy Fitch Perkins' book, *The Pioneer Twins*.

During the Mass all of the processional artifacts were placed on a tiered display covered in blue fabric right in front of the altar. Bishop William Skylstad, Bishop of Spokane, celebrated with Fr. Joe Bell, pastor of Sacred Heart Church. The theme of the liturgy was "Providence of God, We Thank You for All" and the choir was composed of parishioners of four parishes as well as a folk music group from Sacred Heart Parish. Sister Eileen Croghan, provincial superior of St. Ignatius Province, gave a homily emphasizing hope for the future in contrast to the community's changing situations and dwindling numbers. Among the 365 people attending the anniversary celebration were sisters representing all the missions of the province (with the exception of the Missoula region).

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Morin Province in Chile, which had reunited with the Montreal Sisters of Providence in 1970. Also produced in Montreal was "Fruit of the Vine," a videotape biography of Mother Gamelin.

Sisters and the institutions in the West formed a sesquicentennial committee and made their own celebrations. Special Masses were celebrated throughout Sacred Heart and St. Ignatius Provinces, at Providence institutions, local churches and cathedrals. Charitable works celebrated Providence charism: food drives were held throughout the western provinces. At Providence Hospital and Medical Center in Medford, Ore., a month-long drive brought in food and money for the poor. At St. Joseph/Marquette Middle School in Yakima, Wash., a soup line recalled the sisters' early service to people in need. Providence High School, in Burbank, Calif., collected food for families con-

nected to Saint Joseph Medical Center and the Burbank Temporary Aid Center, a local non-profit organization offering short-term emergency assistance to those in need.

At Providence Medical Center in Seattle, Mayor Norm Rice joined employees and members of the community in a cleanup of the area around the hospital and in landscaping a garden area near the main entrance.

A special 150th Mass attended by about 900 people was held at St. James Cathedral in Seattle, on March 27, with Archbishop Thomas J. Murphy presiding. The liturgy was multicultural, and included songs in English, French, and Spanish, along with melodies traditional to Cameroon, the Philippines and Uganda, countries into which the religious community had now expanded its mission.

The 150th year closed fittingly on the Feast of Christ the King, November 21, 1993, with a Mass at Notre Dame Basilica in Montreal, site of Emilie's baptism in 1800 and

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Eustace Ziegler paintings



“Raising the Son of the Widow of Naim”



Ziegler sometimes reused board on which he had started another painting. Here, the back of the frame of “Raising the Son of the Widow of Naim” reveals part of an Alaskan painting that Ziegler had started.

Providence Archives Welcomes a New Volunteer!

On September 5, 2018, Sister Patricia Eley joined the ranks of intrepid archives volunteers. Sr. Pat began with a project sorting a collection of commemorative pins and other items. After finishing this project in short order, Sr. Pat completed the tedious task



Sr. Patricia Eley

of putting into order a collection of newspaper clippings. Her current project requires checking a digital copy of the *Little Journal of Providence* against about 70 original bound copies (that contain printing and binding differences and errors) in order to ensure that a correct and complete digital record of this important publication will be maintained. We appreciate Sr.

Pat's willingness to do this painstaking, complex job, and enjoy the interesting stories from the *Little Journal* she happens on in the course of her work.

Sr. Pat's contribution has been invaluable so far; we look forward to continuing to receive her help on archival projects as we move forward in 2019.

Sr. Pat joins three other archives volunteers:

Sister Virginia Miller continues to donate hours of her time to transcribe handwritten ledgers and documents. Her work allows us to preserve originals by handling them less and to search for information more efficiently. Sr. Virginia is currently transcribing binders of handwritten photograph descriptions from the University of Providence in Great Falls, Mont., saving hours of cataloging time.

Sister Kaye Belcher gives her time to the sisters biographical database project, entering personal and ministry data that helps provincial administration and archives staff keep track of Sisters of Providence and their ministries.

Sister Pauline LeMaire contributes her time and skill when needed to iron garnitures (part of the head-dress of the Sisters of Providence) that can be used in historical depictions of the sisters.



Ziegler

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Eustace Ziegler is known for his depictions of Alaskan natives and landscapes, but these three paintings are of religious themes. The titles are "The Nativity," "Breaking Bread at Emmaus," and "Raising the Son of the Widow of Naim." Although Ziegler's Alaskan art commands high prices, his religious art is less valuable, so a sale of the pieces was not considered. It was decided to hang the pieces at Saint Joseph Residence for all the sisters to enjoy, but first they had to be cleaned. Ziegler's overall color tones for two of the paintings are subdued, and his style is more concerned with atmosphere than with detail. The varnish had darkened over time, and one canvas had warped in its frame. Clearly the paintings needed the attention of a conservator in order to be fully enjoyed. We contacted Bruce Miller, a Seattle art conservator who has done other work in the archives collection, and after several months of painstaking restoration, the paintings were returned to Saint Joseph Residence and will be hung in February.

Our three paintings will join others located in Seattle. A large mural, "Baptism of the Lord" hangs in the reconciliation chapel, formerly the baptistery, at St. James Cathedral. It was commissioned by Archbishop Thomas A. Connolly for the cathedral renovation in the 1950s. The Frye Art Museum holds the largest collection of Ziegler's work, with 69 prints and paintings. Ziegler was the first recipient of the Washington State Arts Award in 1968. He died in 1969 and his funeral was held at St. James Cathedral.

Past Forward turned 25!

The first issue of this newsletter was published in January 1993, and began by explaining to our readers what archives are, what kinds of historic records we keep and what we do with them.

Other news included the introduction of Margaret Gardiner, who served as assistant archivist from 1992 until 1994, and a tour of the Archives provided to Sister Theresa Kissel, SP and Sister Teresa of Avila, DM who was visiting from Uganda and getting tips on establishing an archives for her community.

Twenty-five years, hundreds of tours, and miles of manuscripts later, Providence Archives continues to fulfill the mandate contained in the Sisters of Providence 1858 Customary:

"There shall be in the secretary's and treasurer's office, archives, which must be placed safe from fire and kept in such good order that it may be easy to find any record."

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marriage to Jean-Baptiste Gamelin in 1823. Some 800 people attended, and word had already been received from the Vatican that the Pope intended to sign Emilie's decree of venerability.

Immediately following the anniversary, the Sisters embarked on a four-year journey to implement the resolutions of the 1992 general chapter, which they called the Providence Symphony, a renewal of identity and re-founding of the community.

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