
PAST FORWARD

The Newsletter of the Sisters of Providence Archives, Seattle



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WELCOME TO *PAST FORWARD*

Welcome to *PAST FORWARD* and the Sisters of Providence Archives! *PAST FORWARD* is the new quarterly newsletter of the Sisters of Providence Archives, Sacred Heart Province. Its purpose is to better acquaint the Sisters of Providence Community with the Archives. We hope to increase readers' awareness of the Archives, attract people who can benefit from using our records, and stimulate longtime users to utilize archival sources in creative new ways.

What is the Archives?

The term *archives* refers to both the facility which houses the collections and to the records themselves. The mandate for the archives was first printed in the Customary Rules in 1858. Article 1 reads, "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." This original mandate contains the fundamentals of archival theory and is the foundation on which the Archives was built. The current archives mandate is supported through the Sisters of Providence General Directory; and the Provincial Administration and Health Care Corporations of Sacred Heart Province.

What are archival records?

Archives are documents selected for permanent retention because of their administrative, legal, fiscal, or historic value. Management of the records of Sacred Heart Province is carried out by two departments: the Archives and the Corporate Office Records Management Center. Under the supervision of Sister Helen Brennan, S.P., Provincial Secretary,

Loretta Greene the Archivist for Sacred Heart Province is the custodian of all records of historic value to the Community. Jody Hart, the Records Manager, is the curator of all corporate records having current administrative or legal value.

The records preserved at the Archives have significant historic value to the Community of Sisters, the Corporations, the institutions, and to the continued success of the Providence mission. The Sisters of Providence made important contributions to northwest history. The archives include unique and irreplaceable, original source material available for researchers studying the settlement of the northwest, missionaries, the Catholic Church, health care, education, social services, genealogy, and women religious as part of women's history.

Notable collections include the personal papers of Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart; records and personal papers of the Sisters; records for each institution in the Province; photographs; films; tapes; videos; scrapbooks; early editions of books; supplementary reference materials; and enough artifacts to fill a small museum.

Why do we keep archives?

The text Keeping Archives notes, "Both individuals and organizations dysfunction without a memory. Archives are essential resources to their creators and provide evidence of their important work over time to the wider community." People seek knowledge of the past to gain a sense of stability, to place themselves in a continuum, and to understand the decisions which are the basis for what is today. We are not so different from our Sisters who lived 150 years ago. We are all part of the continuing Providence mission of Emilie Gamelin.

An important function of the Sisters of Providence Archives is to encourage and aid people using the history of the Sisters of Providence. Archival materials are commonly used for anniversary celebrations, dedications, fund raising, publications,

administrative purposes, and for personal and scholarly research. Our goal is to bring the *PAST FORWARD* to connect the past, the present, and the future.

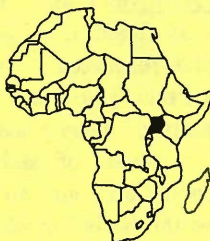
Can I contribute to the archives collections?

Yes! What is happening today will be history tomorrow. Our mission includes actively collecting documentation which will constitute the historic record in years to come. We encourage people to donate personal papers as well as institutional and departmental records relating to the Sisters of Providence to the Archives.

The mission of the Sisters of Providence Archives, Sacred Heart Province is to select, preserve, and make available for research historical materials and to promote the history of the Sisters of Providence.

OUR NEW ASSISTANT ARCHIVIST

On October 4, 1992, a new archivist joined the staff when Margaret Gardiner, a native Bostonian, assumed the Assistant Archivist position. Margaret holds a Masters of Science in Library and Information Science with a concentration in Archives Administration from Simmons College in Boston, and a Bachelor of Arts in History. She has worked at the Museum of American Textile History, North Andover; the Supreme Judicial Court Division of Archives and Records Preservation, Boston; and the Essex Institute, Salem, Massachusetts. Through her work at these institutions, she has processed diverse archival materials including court records, financial records, photographs, and manuscripts notably the records of the 1492 Salem witchcraft trials. She is a member of the Society of American Archivists and other regional archival organizations. Margaret is enthusiastic about archival administration and learning about the Sisters of Providence. She is an asset to the Archives staff and you will enjoy working with her.



SISTER TERESA OF AVILA VISITS

Wednesday, January 6th, Loretta Greene and Margaret Gardiner welcomed Sister Teresa of Avila Nanjobe, D.M., a Daughter of Mary from Uganda, East Africa and Sister Theresa Kissel, S.P. to the Sisters of Providence Archives for an educational

tour. Sister Teresa of Avila represented Sister Mary Clare Cherubim, D.M. who is in the process of establishing a formal archives for their community. Sister Teresa remarked that there are archives documenting the work of men religious in Uganda but none that records the works of women religious. She believes the Daughters of Mary Archives will be one of the first devoted to a group of women religious in East Africa.

During the tour, Sister Teresa learned important basic issues for consideration in starting an archives. Environmental factors unique to Africa, including temperature, humidity, and insect problems which must be monitored and controlled for the preservation of documents were discussed. Different record types, such as paper documents, textiles, photographs, and film have different life spans and storage requirements. Disaster preparedness and security measures, necessary for the protection of historic records are also important issues.

Access to archival records, efficient methods for access to historic information and archives operating policies were areas of interest to Sister Teresa. Standard archival methods of arrangement and description of historic records were discussed as well as the advantages of establishing an archives with an automated system, if possible. The Archives official policies and procedures were shared with Sister Teresa since Sister Mary Clare Cherubim will have to develop policies specific to the needs of the Daughters of Mary Archives. Sister Teresa also received a select bibliography of sources for archival management and information on the International Congress on Archives which will provide professional archival contacts in East Africa.

Sister Teresa was delighted to learn that there are extensive files in the Archives for the Daughters of Mary, including one for her with correspondence, photographs, and newspaper articles dating from the 1960s when she was a student at Providence Heights College of Sister Formation, Issaquah, WA.

It was exciting to have Sister Teresa of Avila tour the Sisters of Providence Archives and seek our counsel. We are looking forward to learning more about the Daughters of Mary Archives in Uganda.

**For more information about the Archives
contact:**

**Sisters of Providence Archives
4800 37th Avenue Southwest
Seattle WA 98126**

(206) 937-4600