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# PAST FORWARD

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The Newsletter of the Sisters of Providence Archives, Seattle

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Summer 1997 Volume 5, Issue 2

## DID YOU KNOW THAT...

... one hundred years ago, a discovery in the frozen northlands of Canada shook Seattle and radiated throughout the world? **GOLD!**

On July 17, 1897, the first shipment of gold from the Klondike, Yukon Territory, arrived in Seattle on the steamer "Portland." Within weeks, Seattle became one of the most popular ports from which excited, hopeful prospectors departed for and dejected, ravished miners arrived from the Klondike gold fields. The Chronicles record the impact this rush for gold had on the 20-year-old Providence Hospital: *"We have quite a few miners who went to the Klondike in search of gold and returned with their strength and money exhausted. Many came to die at the hospital where they found spiritual gold here before they died."*

Over the next few years, the hospital treated hundreds of victims of "gold fever." When the miners moved north and west into Alaska, the Sisters of Providence responded by opening Holy Cross Hospital in Nome. In 1899, Sister Mary Eugene again writes in the Providence Hospital Chronicles:

*"The mad rush for gold in the frozen regions of the north still continues unabated. New fields are constantly being discovered. The latest being Cape Nome on the Bering Sea where the sands of the seashore are so rich with the precious metal that gold may be had simply for the digging. While thousands flock northward in quest of riches and return laden with golden dust, thousands of others who bartered their earthly all to secure the costly means of transportation thither, arrive, only to find themselves the dupes of unscrupulous agents and swindlers. Then again, there are the argonauts whom fortune has favored after months of untold hardships and toil return to Seattle, the gateway of the North only to find themselves a prey to sickness and loathsome disease which no skill of medical art can control. On the return of the miners at the close of the summer season, the Hospital was crowded to its fullest capacity. Beds were hastily put up in every available nook and corner and for nine long weary months the Sisters worked constantly day and night to nurse back to health and strength again, hundreds of the poor unfortunate victims who had sacrificed their all--home, friends and above all health in the unparalleled race for a few ounces of gold."*

100,000 people from around the world set out for the gold fields.

40,000 actually reached Dawson City.

20,000 stayed to search for gold.

Only 4,000 found it.

300 found enough to be considered rich.

Only 50 people managed to keep their wealth.

The multitude of miners, men and women, are not all forgotten. Some are known to us through the Patient Ledger recording their stay at Providence Hospital. Their homelands included France, Scotland,



England, Switzerland, Germany, Iceland, Austria, and the United States. They suffered from a wide variety of ailments and diseases, such as paralysis, tuberculosis, influenza, infected wounds and fractures, acute alcoholism, dementia, typhoid (enteric) fever, starvation, smallpox, scurvy, pneumonia, "effects of cold," and amputation. We meet some of the miners through this ledger excerpt:

PROVIDENCE HOSPITAL,

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON.

Country.	Age.	Sex.		Residence.	Profession.	Entered.			Disease.	Discharged.			Died.		
		M.	F.			Year.	Month.	Day.		Year.	Month.	Day.	Year.	Month.	Day.
Ireland	60	/		Seattle	Contractor	1899	Nov	7	Tuberculosis	1899	Nov	11			
Germany	25	/		Dawson City	Miner	.	.	2	Enteric fever	.	Dec	14			
Swede	25	/		'	'	.	.	2	Boils	.	Nov	9			
American	23	/		Alaska	'	.	.	3	Alcoholism	.	.	5			
German	28	/		'	'	.	.	3	Enteric fever				1899	Nov	14
German	35	/		Alaska	Miner	.	.	25	Paralysis	.	Feb	14			
'	22	/		'	'	.	.	25	Tuberculosis	.	Jan	16			

In addition to chronicles, patient ledgers, and other primary source material, the Archives has numerous publications on "the last great North American gold rush." Pioneering Spirit, by John Shideler and Hal Rothman, tells the fascinating story of the sisters' ministry in Nome and throughout Alaska. We have extra copies of this book in the Archives and would be happy to send you a free copy. For more information on the history of Providence Hospital, we recommend Seattle's Sisters of Providence, by Ellis Lucia.



RECENT DONATIONS

From time to time in this newsletter we will share information on significant donations to the Archives. Many thanks to the following and to all who help us preserve the history of Providence.

- Jack Greeley, former System Director of Public Affairs, donated personal papers, photographs, and artifacts from his 1985 visit to the Sisters of Providence in Chile.
- The late Father James VanGogh bequeathed a beautiful statue of the Infant of Prague, originally from Providence Academy, Vancouver. It was Father's wish that the Infant return to its "home" with the sisters.
- Providence Medford Medical Center and Providence Milwaukie Hospital sent quite an assortment of nifty t-shirts, mugs, and other memorabilia.

ANNIVERSARY UPDATE

Warren Good, Executive Director of Providence Newberg Health Foundation, called to let us know that this month marks the fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the hospital. In 1979, Newberg Community Hospital entered into a management contract with Providence St. Vincent Medical Center, and officially became part of the Sisters of Providence Health System on July 1, 1994. Congratulations, Newberg!

EXHIBIT BROCHURE

The Sisters of Providence Historical Exhibit at the System Office has been a topic in this newsletter before. Since some of you may not have an opportunity to see the exhibit, we are enclosing a copy of the brochure. If you would like to share the brochure with others, we can provide you with extra copies. Enjoy!

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