

## Providence Archives Newsletter

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

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A Jubilee Story

Anniversaries

## From the Archivist

Loretta Z. Greene

### Changes and Transitions

Spring and summer are times of change and transition in many ways. Emerging from winter doldrums we care for ourselves, clean the house, plant the garden, donate unused items to charity, and engage in activities to bring new life. So too in Providence Archives. This spring and summer we are experiencing staff changes and have transferred liturgical items and reference volumes to other ministries; like all changes and transitions we hope it brings new life and growth to all we do.

hard to sum up Emily's many contributions over the years but the following gives an overview: accessioned, appraised and processed religious community and institution collections; catalogued artifacts and created a manual to standardize the process; designed newsletters; created exhibits; assisted researchers; oversaw the chronicles transcription project with Sister Virginia Miller; expanded the online face of the archives; and worked with Peter Schmid, visual resources archivist, to enhance the Archives online database. Archives benefited

greatly from Emily's facility with technology. While some of her work was run of the mill, some was just plain fun such as the time she was the model for filming the process of dressing in the traditional habit, or, while cataloguing medical artifacts, hip replacement parts were spread around her office!

We will miss Emily's vibrant personality, creativity and drive. And, we wish her all the best in her new endeavors knowing that she will excel in whatever she does. Providence of God, we thank you for all!

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*Emily Dominick*

### Emily Dominick becomes a 'Husky'

Associate Archivist, Emily Hughes Dominick, left Providence Archives on May 29, to begin a new position at the University of Washington (Seattle) Libraries Special Collections Division as Technical Services Archivist.

In the past 7 ½ years, Emily has been an outgoing and positive personality with researchers, visitors, provincial and corporate staff, and sisters at Saint Joseph Residence. It is

## Inhabiting a Saint's World

Fr. Jon Buffington

“Holy relics or sacred sites have the power to transport us in time, and to transform us. We feel that we can stand beside the prophets or the saints, share their humanity, inhabit—for a brief, intense moment—their world.”

-Neil MacGregor,  
*Shakespeare's Restless World*

Over the past two years, residents and visitors to Saint Joseph Residence have occasionally seen a solitary figure in the archives surrounded by boxes of various sized frames and holders, typing away on his MacBook. He is Fr. Jon Buffington from Portland, Ore, a former chaplain (now retired) at Providence Portland Medical

Center. In addition to his teaching and work as an iconographer, Fr. Jon has a passion for saints and their remains and has been spending time cataloguing the relics in the Seattle and Spokane archives collections. His work has been of immense value to the archives, as we now have a much better understanding of our holdings. In addition to his expertise in the study of relics, Fr. Jon is also a *reliquiarum custos*, authorized by the Church to care for and house relics. In this capacity, he took tiny bone fragments of the seven founding Servites which had been in an envelope, and created a beautiful reliquary for them as a gift to the archives, along with an authenticating document.

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## From the Archivist

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### Artifacts Cataloguer Hired

On June 8, the archives staff welcomed Jessica Long to the new position of artifacts collection cataloguer. This is a temporary position to catalogue the collection of more than 4,000 artifacts representing the sisters; religious community; health care, education and social service ministries; and various aspects of Catholicism housed at Mount St. Joseph in Spokane, Washington. You will meet Jessica in the next issue of Past Forward!

### Liturgical Pieces Bring New Life to Providence High School

In 2014, Providence High School, Burbank, Calif., created a new chapel space at the school and hoped to find objects that would reflect the legacy of the Sisters of Providence, and the mission of education, to place in the unfurnished chapel. Sister

Lucille Dean facilitated contact between the archives and Mr. Joseph Sciuto, head of school. Over the next few months, nine objects from the archives reserves including statues of St. Vincent de Paul, St. Joseph and Sacred Heart of Jesus; free-standing and wall crucifixes; and a processional cross were selected for long-term loan to the school. We are pleased that these objects will enhance the Catholic message in the Providence High School chapel sanctuary, campus ministry office, student activity center, and principal's conference room.

### Our Mother of Sorrows Chapel at Providence Mount St. Vincent

Beside the main chapel at Providence Mount St. Vincent (PMSV), Seattle, Wash., is a small devotional chapel dedicated to Our Mother of Sorrows, a principal patron of the Sisters of Providence. The devotion pre-dates the foundation of the religious community

when Emilie Gamelin spiritually united herself to Mary and it calls to mind the seven sorrows Mary silently suffered during the life of Jesus. These chapels were traditional in ministries that housed provincial administration offices throughout the religious community. The Our Mother of Sorrows chapel at the Mount was dedicated in 1949 and included a devotional altar, statue, and a set of Seven Sorrows stations. When Saint Joseph Residence was built in 1966 adjacent to the Mount, the statue and stations were transferred to the new chapel at the Residence. In the following years, the statue in the Mount chapel changed to honor other devotions to Mary.

In 2014, the director of pastoral care at the Mount inquired about returning the chapel returning to its original devotion and the availability of a statue of Our Mother of Sorrows. The project was supported and approved by administrators at Saint Joseph Residence

and the Mount. The Archives had in its reserves a statue of Our Mother of Sorrows from Sacred Heart Academy, Sprague, Wash. that was similar in age and design as well as a set of



Station IV, Jesus Meets His Blessed Mother

Seven Sorrows stations from Providence Hospital, Seattle. One of the stations needed conservation work, and Daniel Hodo, painter, PMSV, designed and built an oak shrine for the statue to give it a larger presence on the altar. The colors and artistic elements in the

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## Inhabiting a Saint's World

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Following are Fr. Jon's own thoughts on his work in the archives.

I came up for Sr. Lucy St. Hilaire's funeral and wandered into the archives wondering if I could take a glimpse at the relics there. I was shown a few drawers which had a jumble of reliquaries but no one knew exactly what was there. That got me thinking. I have collected relics since I was in high school and have quite a large number of my own. Here was a chance to explore a bit of the history of the Sisters of Providence through putting some order into their collection. By examining the *thecae* (the containers) and any documents that might go

with them, they could tell a bit of the story of Providence in the Pacific Northwest.



Fr. Jon Buffington

To be used in public worship in the church, a relic must have a document authenticating its origin. The relic is described as being 1st Class (bone, hair or other body part, or a piece of the instrument of martyrdom); 2nd Class (clothing or some-

thing intimately connected with the saint or blessed, such as the autograph of Bl. Emilie Gamelin); or 3rd Class (something touched to the authentic relics of the saint or blessed). The relic must be sealed into the *theca*, usually with red silk threads and sealing wax impressed with the seal of a bishop, religious order, or postulator who promotes the cause of the blessed for canonization. Without these, the relic may be used for private devotion only.

So part of what I was trying to do was matching the relics with a document (if any were available), as well as trying to fit them into the history of the religious community. In doing so, I was able to uncover a few pieces of forgotten Providence stories. For instance, I found a broken frame contain-

ing an intricate design of gilded paper decoration, called *paperole*, that surrounds a large wax disk called an *Agnus Dei* that had been prepared by Mother Joseph as a gift for Dr. and Mrs. David Wall, early benefactors of the sisters.

Many frames were put together possibly as some sort of project, perhaps by postulants or novices. They used identical decorations and often contained the same saints' bones in similar layouts. Many of these were sealed by the same bishop; and the papers, were also by him.

It was an incredibly interesting project that allowed me to glimpse a bit of the world of the Sisters of Providence through their devotion to the saints and their relics, for which I always will be grateful. ✍

*From the Archivist*  
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chapel have created a peaceful and inspirational atmosphere where devotion to Our Mother of Sorrows has been renewed with residents. The Our Mother of Sorrows chapel was officially opened on April 26, 2015, when the main chapel was named the Pigott Chapel.

### Library Transfer

Prior to the formation of Mother Joseph Province in 2000, each of the two western provinces, St. Ignatius and Sacred Heart, had established archival programs. When the archival collections were brought together a few years later the staff began identifying publications and historical materials for duplication and relevance. A complete run of *Review for Religious* is an example. This journal began publication in 1942 and includes articles on a wide range of topics pertinent to religious life. For the Archives, this publication was no longer requested for use and since it is available in electronic format it was a likely candidate to offer to another repository. A notice was placed on the listserv of the Archivists of Religious Collections Section of the Society of American Archivists and The Catholic Archives of Texas, Austin, was selected as the recipient. Fifty-two volumes, 1942-1994, were shipped in May. This was a win-win donation because they received reference volumes useful in their archives, nothing went to the landfill, and we gained shelf space in the artifacts storage area useful for the upcoming artifact cataloguing project. ✍

## The Icing on the Cake: A Jubilee Story

Peter F. Schmid



*The real deal: flower and anchor with "50" from Mother Joseph's 1895 golden jubilee cake*

As the sisters of Mother Joseph Province celebrate jubilee, it is, for the jubilarians and their fellow sisters and friends, a time not only of celebration, but of reflection upon years of dedicated service.

We do a lot of reflecting in archives, and this year would mark the 170th jubilee of Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart, who entered the community in 1845. Mother Joseph's golden (fiftieth) jubilee was celebrated in grand style over three days – August 27-29, 1895.

That year, the sisters' annual retreat was planned to coincide with Mother Joseph's jubilee celebration, so that many of the sisters in Sacred Heart Province would already be in Vancouver, Wash. for the celebration. Other delegations arrived, including general councilor Mother Cecile from Montreal, Mother Mary

of the Infant Jesus from St. Ignatius Province, and Mother Mary Theresa from St. Vincent de Paul Province across the river in Portland, Ore. Religious from other communities, distinguished clergy and friends filled the chapel to capacity when Bishop Aegidius Junger offered pontifical Mass on August 27th. The homily was given by Redemptorist Fr. J.B. Cronin, who had also directed the sisters' retreat. A lighted "50" adorned the chapel.

The following days were filled with original theatrical pieces and music performed by sisters, novices, and orphans and students of Providence Academy. Banquets were served and speeches given.

The archives hold a wealth of original documents and artifacts from the celebration, including letters from well-wish-

ing sisters and clergy, decorations and favors with incredibly intricate handiwork, scripts from plays and a model ship dubbed "Gamelin" which was built by a resident of Hospice Gamelin in Montreal, representing the ship which carried the foundresses westward in 1856.

But there is one piece, or, several pieces, which are more extraordinary still – and which never cease to amaze and delight those who tour our department: decorations from Mother Joseph's jubilee cake. Yes, the actual cake decorations, made of icing and shaped into flowers and an anchor bearing "50."

So, if you are one of the jubilarians this year, consider keeping a flower or two from your cake; you never know, an archivist might be writing about it in 120 years! ✍

## 2015: A Year of Providence Anniversaries

*Congratulations to the following Facilities celebrating anniversaries as part of Providence Health & Services!*

*60 years*

☞ Providence High School, Burbank, California

*30 years*

☞ Providence House, Yakima, Washington

☞ Providence Vincent House, Seattle, Washington

*25 years*

☞ Providence Heritage House at the Market, Seattle, Washington

☞ Providence St. Joseph Medical Center, Polson, Montana

*20 years*

☞ Providence ElderPlace, Seattle, Washington

☞ Providence Horizon House, Anchorage, Alaska

☞ Providence Hospice & Home Care of Snohomish County, Everett, Washington

☞ Providence House, Portland, Oregon

☞ Providence Place, Chehalis, Washington

☞ Providence SoundHomeCare and Hospice, Olympia, Washington

*10 years*

☞ Providence Gamelin House, Seattle, Washington

☞ Providence Valdez Medical Center, Valdez, Alaska



*Providence High School, Burbank, ca. 1956. Image #188.A2.1*

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