

PROVIDENCE ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

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



From the Archivist

Loretta Z. Greene, M.A., CA

As part of its mandate to collect, preserve and make available the history of the Sisters of Providence and Providence ministries in the West, Providence Archives maintains a large collection of artifacts. These three-dimensional objects provide a tangible, visual documentation of Providence history that

complement the paper records and photographs.

Since its formal establishment in 1971, the Archives has received artifacts from closing ministries, 'house cleaning', and souvenir keepers. If the Archives did not retain these objects, no one would. Now preserved is a valuable collection of more than 4,000 objects documenting the religious community and the health care, education and social service ministries in the West since 1856.

The majority of this sizable artifact collection is densely stored in an 1800 square foot area in the lower level of Mount St. Joseph, Spokane, Washington. Over the years the Archives staff developed a cataloguing procedures manual, and catalogued and cared for these objects in conjunction with their other duties, however, those efforts have not been sufficient: only one-quarter have been catalogued. It became obvious that a staff member dedicated to the artifact collections was

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Meet Jessica Long, Our Artifacts Collections Cataloguer

Tell us about your background, personally and professionally.

My twin sister and I were born in Colorado, but we have lived in several U.S. states and Germany. I have always been interested in history and traveling which gave direction to my studies. In 2011, I graduated from University of Nebraska-Lincoln with degrees in Anthropology and International Studies, and minors in Archeology, Art History and German. After graduating from Oklahoma State University in 2014 with a Master's degree in International Studies and a focus on cultural heritage and museums, I moved to Spokane where my family had moved a year earlier. The majority of my professional experience comes from working with museum ar-

tifact collections, but I also have experience with museum tours, education, and exhibits.

What drew you to collections cataloguing?

I was really drawn to collections cataloguing after working on a project with one of my undergraduate professors. We attempted to identify a piece of scale armor by researching the history and use of scale armor in North America and by analyzing how the artifact was constructed. Hunting for clues by examining and handling the armor was my favorite part of the project! Looking back, I realize that although the research was important, we discovered a lot of significant information only because we looked at the artifact itself. Our co-authored paper on the project was published in August 2015.

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Jessica with some of the artifacts she is cataloging

Archives Month #AskAnArchivist Poster

October is the month of jack-o-lanterns, candy corn, and... American Archives! Celebrating American Archives Month in October gives our profession the opportunity to tell, (or remind!) people that items important to them are being preserved, catalogued, cared for, and made accessible. This past year, we took inspiration from the #AskAnArchivist Day Twitter campaign and set up a poster in Spokane for Sisters and employees to ask questions about Providence Archives or archives in general. Throughout the month, we received some interesting (and fun!) questions that we'd like to share! Everyone who participated received a special gift bag, a private tour of the artifact repository in Spokane, and our thanks!

“How do you have enough space to store everything?”

The Archives has three storage areas that currently meet our needs: the main repository in Seattle for documents and photographs; Spokane repository for artifacts; and off-site commercial storage for records. But we are constantly growing! In general, we are selective in what items we keep and try to organize our storage areas to maximize space.

“How old is the earliest item in your collection?”

Our oldest item is a medieval music manuscript from the 15th century! Our oldest artifact is a portable pump organ made in 1746. Documentation with the organ notes that it was brought to St. Ignatius, Montana, from Vancouver, Washington in 1864 by the sister foundresses of St. Ignatius Indian School.

“Do you ever go back through the archives and toss things? If so do you offer it to others?”

Yes, occasionally we re-evaluate our collections and deaccession (remove from the collection) items for various reasons, such as having duplicates or not aligning with our collection policy. Depending on what is deaccessioned, the item might be put into our education collection for exhibit purposes, or transferred to another historical repository.

“What things are you currently adding to the collection, if any?”

Large and small accessions of historical records and artifacts are constantly received. A recent major accession is 80 boxes of records from Providence St. Peter Hospital, Olympia, Wash., Administration, and Marketing and Communications departments, 1960-2004. (If you are an employee of Providence Health & Services, are you aware of office records that should be evaluated for transfer to the Archives?)

“How can I preserve family photos?”

There are a few simple things that you can do to preserve family photographs: store them in acid free boxes or folders; avoid direct sunlight; do not store them in attics, basements, or areas with fluctuating or high temperature and humidity; and avoid using adhesives, ink, or anything that is non-reversible. There are resources online for more information!

“Who is better, Nicholas Cage in National Treasure or Indiana Jones?”

A poll of the Archives staff results in three votes for Indiana Jones and one vote for Nicholas Cage.

“Do you hold auctions for some of the items? Can you sell items to the public?”

No, we do not hold auctions and we do not sell items to the public. Although, you can request copies of our photographs! You can search our Digital Collections Database and find more information on our website: www.providence.org/archives.

“Why do you do what you do? What is the importance of the work?”

We do what we do for many reasons, all of which are important! Personally: We love history! Holding a piece of history is like stepping into the past. We love the challenges of research, which is like linking pieces of a puzzle, to discover a story and then telling that story. Professionally: we keep archives, because they are essential not only to understanding our past, but also to providing evidence of legal agreements, operations of governments and organizations, and historical events. The importance of Providence Archives is to preserve and tell the stories of the Sisters of Providence and Providence Health & Services for current and future generations.

Until next October, go to our website at www.providence.org/archives and:

- Discover photographic gems on our digital collections database
- Enjoy historic movies on our YouTube channel
- Follow us on Facebook
- Contact us via email at archives@providence.org

Jessica Long

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Tell us about your job as Artifact Collections Cataloguer for Providence Archives.

My job consists of researching, numbering, and photographing artifacts in the



Jessica preparing to photograph the St. Thomas Home drum using the small studio she has created

collection, which range from small nursing pins to large reed organs. After compiling information, I enter the data into the digital collections database and prepare the artifacts for proper storage. The end goal is to catalogue the artifact collections and in so doing, provide data for decisions regarding retention, conservation, storage solutions, and future space needs.

In the short time you have worked with the collections, which artifact is the most interesting?

The fife and drum from the Fife and Drum Corp at St. Thomas Home, Great Falls, Montana are the most interesting artifacts that I have cataloged so far. Through research, I found both mentioned in the institution's Chronicles and pictured in a photograph of the Corps! It is very exciting to be able to link different record sources together. The most

curious artifact that I found is a souvenir Taiwanese aboriginal wood spear! How the spear came to be in the collection for Mary Immaculate School, Demet, Idaho, is a mystery I have yet to solve!

What challenges do you encounter?

I often describe this job as being similar to solving a puzzle. To connect an artifact with its unique history, I use information from the accession record and then research paper records and manufacturer information, look through photograph collections and institutional chronicles, search online for similar or identical objects, and talk with Sisters of Providence who might recognize or remember a story about the artifact. It can be quite a challenge, especially if I cannot find all the pieces!

What have you accomplished to date?

So far I have cataloged artifacts from 6 institutions: Providence St. Vincent Medical Center (Portland, Ore.); Mary Immaculate School (DeSmet, Id.); St. Clare Hospital (Fort Benton, Mont.); Providence Hospital (Wallace, Id.); St.

Thomas Home (Great Falls, Mont.); and Providence Medford Medical Center (Medford, Ore). I have also updated cataloging resources and materials, created a shelf location system, and installed a photography studio. As an institution's artifacts are catalogued, I organize, clean and rearrange the storage space. I am also learning a lot about the Sisters of Providence, their ministries, and Providence Health & Services!

What is your favorite part of the job?

My favorite aspect of working with collections is discovering the stories behind the artifacts! Not just who used it or where it's from, but who made it, how it was made, and how it ended in up in a collection. One small artifact can lead you through a trail in history and my job is to uncover the steps. ✍

From the Archivist

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necessary to move the project forward, and Providence Archives was fortunate to receive approval for a full-time, two to three year temporary position.

Jessica Long joined the Providence Archives staff as Artifacts Collections Cataloguer in June 2015. In this newsletter you will meet her and hear about her recent activities.

Along with the obvious goal to catalogue objects and make them more accessible for exhibits, outreach, and research, other outcomes of her work include: acquiring full knowledge of the extent and content of the collection; disposing of duplicate and unrelated objects; and protecting retained artifacts through proper storage. Future outcomes will include: facilitate insurance evaluation; create a disaster recovery plan focused on artifacts; and plan for changing storage needs.

Welcome, Jessica! We look forward to updates about cataloguing progress and your artifact discoveries! ✍

Got Artifacts?



Do you work in a Providence ministry and walk by an object that you wonder about each day? Is there an old religious painting or other piece of artwork that you think needs more care? Let us know! While not every old painting or liturgical item is of value, there are some that have real significance to the history of the Sisters of Providence religious community or Providence institutions.

You may remember reading about the St. Joseph of the Flood statue which we wrote about a couple of years ago ("Statue Made by Mother Joseph Comes Home," Spring 2014). What looked like just a worn concrete statue was in fact made by Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart, and was transferred to the archives for restoration and preservation.

Of course, not every object is as significant as St. Joseph of the Flood, but as you see from Jessica Long's work, the ordinary can become extraordinary when placed in the context of history!

2016: A Year of Providence Anniversaries

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

130 years

☞ Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center, Spokane, Washington

50 years

☞ Saint Joseph Residence, Seattle, Washington

30 years

☞ Providence St. Joseph Care Center, Spokane, Washington

☞ Providence Milwaukie Hospital, Milwaukie, Oregon

☞ Emilie House, Portland, Oregon

20 years

☞ Providence Marianwood, Issaquah, Washington

☞ Providence Holy Cross Medical Center, Mission Hills, California

☞ Providence St. Elizabeth Care Center, Toluca Lake, California

☞ Providence Seward Medical and Care Center, Seward, Alaska

10 years

☞ Providence Elizabeth House, Seattle, Washington



Sr. Barbara Schamber, provincial superior of Sacred Heart Province, and hospital administrator Robert W. Vial on dedication day at Providence Milwaukie Hospital, July 1, 1986. Image #218.D1.004.

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