

ARCHIVES NEWS

Daughters of Charity Archives, Northeast
Province

Winter/Spring 2008

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Archives Annual Report 2007



What does an archivist do every day? I have heard this question several times since becoming Provincial Archivist in Jan 2007. While reading a list of daily activities would cure the most stubborn insomnia, the following information from the 2007 Provincial Archives Annual Report may answer this question.

The Provincial Archivists added 52 new sets of records to the Provincial Archives in 2007. A majority of these records were from the Provincial Administration, however we received a few important donations from individual sisters missions in the Northeast Province.

Of these 52 donations 46 of them were re-housed in appropriate archival storage, and were inventoried and added to the Archives database.

In 2007 the Provincial Archivists answered 72

research requests. Half of these requests were for genealogical information about sisters or children raised in orphanages run by the Daughters of Charity. The remainder of the requests were for historical information on the Daughters' missions in the Northeast Province, or general historical information about the Community .

The Archivists also worked on several special projects during 2007 including: updating the "In Memory of Our Sisters" biographies by Sr Margaret Ahl, the transcription of oral history interviews conducted by Sr Elaine Wheeler, and updating and improving the catalog records for the 1800 artifacts in the Archives.

In addition, the Provincial Archivist revised and updated the Disaster Plan for the Archives, and explored strategies for preserving electronic records, including digital photos, emails, and word processing documents created by sisters in the Province.

The Provincial Archivists also attended several meetings in 2007 including the Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting in Chicago, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference Spring Meeting in Scranton, PA, and the regular meeting of the US Provincial Archivists in Emmitsburg Maryland.

Provincial Archivists Meet in Emmitsburg



In September 2007 the Provincial Archivists of the 5 US Provinces met in

Emmitsburg Maryland for their biennial meeting. The meeting was a chance for the Archivists

to discuss projects, share insights and wonder at some of the treasures in the St Josephs Provincial House Archives.

Keep you eyes open for upcoming collaborative projects from the Provincial Archivists including the 2009 bicentennial celebrations of Elizabeth Seton's arrival in

Emmitsburg, and an LCWR exhibit on women religious in the United States.

The Archivists also discussed the role of the Archives in the Visioning for the Mission Process and agreed to be involved as advocates for archives, and to seek ways to support the

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Provincial Archivists Meet (continued from p.1)

VFM process as it develops.

The meeting was an excellent balance of business and fun that included a tour of Seton historic sites in Baltimore, a visit to a needlepoint exhibit at the Maryland Historical Society showcasing materials from the Archives in Emmitsburg, and a tour of the newly renovated Basilica in Baltimore.

Everyone attending came away with some new ideas, and a broader appreciation for the history of the community and a renewed commitment to preserving it for future generations.



Seton Health System NEH grant.

The Seton Health System Archives in Troy, NY were awarded a \$5000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to improve the preservation of materials in the archives. This grant, allowed the archives to purchase additional shelving and materials, and hire a consultant to survey and make recommendations for improving the storage and handling of the Seton Health Archives.

In November 2007 a consultant from the Northeast Document Conservation Center conducted a day-long



preservation assessment of the archives. She looked at storage conditions, security, staffing and policies and procedures in

the hospital archives. As a result of the hard work of the hospital archivist and the ongoing commitment of the hospital administration, the consultant was favorably impressed with the archives. Unfortunately, no archives is perfect and she suggested some areas for improvement.

Sr Martha Ann Gilman, the Seton Health Archivist, received the 30 page report in January 2008 and is looking forward to implementing the recommendations.

If you are interested in similar grant opportunities for a hospital or other small archives please contact the Provincial Archivist for more information.



Recent Additions to the Collection

The Archives added several interesting and important collections to the Archives in the second half of 2007.

In September Sr Louise Sullivan donated the materials she collected while writing her book *Rosalie Rendu: A Daughter of Charity on Fire with Love for the Poor*. The materials include a wealth of information on Sr Rosalie, Frederick Ozanam and the foundation of the Society of



St Vincent De Paul, poor neighborhoods in Paris in the 19th-century and the history of the Community in 19th-Century France. Anyone interested in these and other topics are welcome to consult the materials in the Provincial Archives.

In October the Provincial Archives received a generous donation from Mary Heugel, of letters sent to her by her Sister, Margaret Ahl. The handwritten letters provide detailed descriptions of Sister Margaret's work and travels in the Holy Land in the early 1980s. During this time Sr Margaret lived in Bethlehem while establishing the Nursing School at Bethlehem University. She worked closely with the local Palestinians at the University and was able to travel to religious and historic sites throughout the Holy Land. Her correspondence to her sister provide wonderful descriptions of her work and travels and offer first hand insights into the social, political and religious issues effecting the region. The Archives secretary typed transcripts of the correspondence that are available for researchers, or anyone interested in Sr Margaret's life and work in Bethlehem. The letters will be added to Sr Margaret's papers that include extensive photographs of her travels, and reports from her work in Bethlehem.



Emmitsburg Video Mystery Solved!

In the 1990s the Provincial Archives received a video tape of home movies of sisters in the Seminary in Emmitsburg in the early 1950s. Many of the sisters including Joan Curran Helen Agnes Davenport, and Oliva Cunane were familiar faces and easy to identify. However, we had no way of knowing who made the home movies, and who some of the "stars" of the films were.

Because of a chance meeting this fall, the Provincial Archivist solved the mystery of the anonymous home movies. During a brief conversation at the wake services for Sr Margaret Ahl, a woman paying her respects asked if the Archives still had her home movies!

The video tape was given to Sr Louise Gallahue by Beverly Creehan (Sr Catherine Marie) for the Provincial Archives. The home movies of were shot by her father George Creehan while visiting her and her sister Dianne while they were in the Seminary. The home movies

were shown at meetings of a Boston area parents group for the families of sisters in the seminary. Eventually the family transferred them to videotape.

Now that the mysterious origin of the tape was solved, who were the sisters in the video? In January 2008 Beverly Creehan and Sr Joan Curran stopped by the Provincial Archives to view the movies, relive some memories, and help identify some of the sisters and places featured in the movies.

In addition to showing the lively campus of St Joseph's College and the seminary, the movies also include before and after footage of the 1964 change of habit, scenes of Laboure Clinic in Boston and Seton High School in Binghamton. The individual sisters appearing in the movies are too numerous to list, but many sisters from the northeast and southeast feature prominently.

The movies shot by the Creehan family make an interesting companion piece to another "mystery" movie in the archives. This movie features black and white footage of St Joseph's College, sisters and the Emmitsburg area. It was shot sometime before 1943. Unfortunately, we have no information about who shot the movie, or why, and many of the sisters in the footage remain anonymous. We are keeping our fingers crossed that someone will come forward to solve the second Emmitsburg video mystery!

If you have any questions about donating materials to the archives, including what materials belong in the archives please contact John Diefenderfer for help.

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Suggestions about how the archives can better serve the Community are also welcome.

