
ARCHIVES NEWS

Volume 1, Issue 1

January 2007

New Provincial Archivist

Sr Mary Francis Martin, D.C.

As most of you already know through the Council Chronicles, Sister Margaret Ahl will complete her time as Provincial Archivist in January 2007. We are very grateful to Sister Margaret for all that she has done in this needed, but hidden service to the Community. The archives conserve the “cultural heritage” of the Province and are important to us as individuals as well as a Community. Following in Sister Elaine Wheeler’s footsteps, Sister Margaret foresaw many ways in which the archives enhance and keep a record of our life together. A few examples of her work include making the lives of our deceased Sister available on the web site to each Sister and in a very attractive form; generously doing research at the request of local ministries as well as the Provincial Council; and updating the information on the healthcare ministries. We are grateful that she will continue her work even as she gives up the director position.

John Diefenderfer, who has been working with both Sisters Margaret and Elaine, will become the Provincial Archivist

continued on page 2

Seton Health System Archives Receives Preservation Grant

The Archives for St Mary’s Hospital and Seton Health System in Troy NY received a grant for \$4,969 from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The money was awarded as part of the NEH Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions program that is designed to help smaller archives, libraries and museums improve and care for their collections.

The grant money will pay for a consultant from the Northeast Document Conservation Center to assess the preservation needs of the Seton Health archives and suggest ways to improve storage conditions for the collection. The grant will also finance the replacement of wooden shelves with appropriate archival shelving, and purchase additional storage containers the collection.

The Seton health System Archives contains archival materials relating to the history of St Mary’s Hospital, Leonard Hospital, St Mary’s Hospital School of Nursing, and Seton Health System. The hospital was founded at the request of Rev. Peter Havermans as part of St. Mary’s House of Charity. After caring for patients in St Mary’s School and Orphanage for six months the hospital was incorporated March 11, 1851 as Troy Hospital Association. School of Nursing opened in 1894, closed in 1933. The name was officially changed to St. Mary’s Hospital of Troy February 5, 1949. It merged with Leonard Hospital, to become Seton health System in 1994.

Congratulations to Sister Marta Ann Gilman and everyone at Seton Health who contributed to the grant!



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 Research in the Archives
- 2 New Archivist at Sisters Hospital, Buffalo
- 3 Provincial Archives Completes Grant Project
- 4 St Louise House Loses Statue

effective January 1st, 2007. John is not new to you. He was hired by Sister Elaine in April, 1999 and has been working in the archives ever since. He has visited many of the local archives sites to help with their organization as well as in any other way he can. John recently participated in the archivists' trip to the Motherhouse planned by the Vincentian Studies Institute so that he would understand our heritage first hand. We are grateful to John for accepting the Provincial Archivist position.



Research in the Archives

The Archives contains in its multiple storage boxes treasures of information waiting to be discovered. These documents, repositories of the history of our Northeast Province, often give surprising answers if asked clear questions. In 2006 the archivists received 67 requests for information, most of them reaching us by email. Here are a few examples of "research requests" made to the archivists over the past year.

- Information about Sisters remembered from the past
- Photos of schools, orphanages, and hospitals
- Details about Community saints
- Historical information about missions in the Northeast Province

Many times inquirers have been referred to Diocesan archives or the archives of the local Catholic Charities, for it is unusual for records pertaining to individual children to be kept in the Provincial Archives. But even being pointed to the right sources is a valuable service provided.

In one notable case this past year an inquirer received great satisfaction. She asked if we had any information about St Joseph's-Gonzaga Memorial Asylum in Philadelphia where she spent several years of her childhood. We not only found records of her Confirmation and First Communion, but we found over twenty-five photographs of her (including one of her with Santa Claus and Bobby Rydell)! Upon seeing the photos she exclaimed, "What memories they have brought back to me. I can't thank you enough for putting the pieces of this part of my life in pictures!"

Do you wonder about specific aspects of our Community history? If your answer is yes, the archivists are willing to do what they can to provide you with answers.



New Archivist at Sisters Hospital

In early December 2006, Sister Mary Grace Higgins was named to serve Archivist for Sisters Hospital in Buffalo, NY. She will be replacing Sister Geraldine Coleman in the position. Prior to becoming the Hospital Archivist Sister Mary Grace's worked in a number of child care and social service positions including Nazareth Child Care Center. Most recently she was a docent in Emmitsburg at the National Shrine of Elizabeth Ann Seton. We wish her all the best in her new role as archivist.

Sister Geraldine served as the Archivist at Sisters hospital from 2003 to 2006 and oversaw several major projects including physically moving the Archives to a new location, transferring numerous artifacts and records to the Archives when the hospital closed the School of Nursing building, and the acquisition of a large series of early-twentieth-century patient records and administrative records from Providence Retreat. The Provincial archivists will surely miss her hard work, dedicated service and warm smile.



PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES

DE PAUL PROVINCIAL HOUSE

96 MENANDS RD

ALBANY, NY

518/462-5593

SISTER MARGARET AHL, D.C.

ARCHIVIST

mahl@dc-northeast.org

JOHN DIEFENDERFER

PROVINCIAL ARCHIVIST

Jdiefenderfer@dc-northeast.org

SISTER ELAINE WHEELER, D.C.

CERTIFIED ARCHIVIST

ewheeler@dc-northeast.org

The mission of the Daughters of Charity Archives of the Northeast Province is to organize and preserve the documents related to the history, activities, and members of the Daughters of Charity especially in the Northeast Province so that the charism is preserved for future generations, the needs of administrators and managers are met, and the work of historians is facilitated.

Provincial Archives Completes Grant Project

“Documenting Catholic Education: A Research Guide to Daughters of Charity Schools In New York State” is available for download from the Provincial Archives website.

www.dc-northeast.org/files/daughtersofcharity/files/DHP.pdf.

The project surveyed archival records relating to schools and educational institutions in New York State sponsored and staffed by the Daughters of Charity. The research guide compiled from these survey results will prove helpful to historians, genealogists, and other researchers interested in locating records in the Provincial Archives, as well as diocesan and other religious communities’ archives. If you know of additional records relating to one or more of the schools in the guide that are available to the public for research, please contact the Provincial Archives.

The project was funded by a grant from the New York State Documentary Heritage Program; a state-wide grant program aimed at preserving and improving access to New York’s historical records.



St Louise House Loses Statue

On January 16, 2007 the Statue of St Louise De Marillac in the St Louise house Garden was destroyed in an ice storm. The storm, which swept across the northeast caused a tree on the grounds of St Louise House to fall and destroy the statue of St Louise. Unfortunately the Archives does not have any information about the history of this Statue of St Louise. If you can provide us with any information about the statue, please contact the Archives. The Statue may be gone, but we can preserve its history!



Photo by Sr Mary Francis Barnes