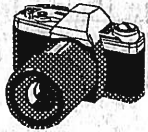

PAST FORWARD

The Newsletter of the Sisters of Providence Archives, Seattle

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SISTERS' PORTRAITS WANTED

Sister Rita Bergamini, S.P., the first Archivist for Sacred Heart Province, now works twenty hours a week processing special collections. After standing at the helm from 1972-1992, now Sister Rita devotes one half of her time to special archives projects and half to enjoying the simple pleasures of life. Monday through Wednesday noon she processes photograph and manuscript collections. Then she closes up shop and has more time to enjoy life's simple pleasures: music, a family history project, craft fairs, and her many hobbies.

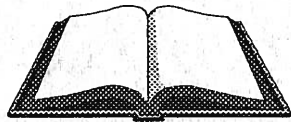
This November, Sister Rita's work at the Archives involved reprocessing the Sacred Heart Province Sister Personnel photograph collection. The collection includes over 2,000 portraits of sisters currently living in Sacred Heart Province, our sisters who were born to eternal life, and former sisters who decided to leave the community. The photographs date from the 1880s to the present and are arranged by sisters' profession numbers.

Sister Rita created an index for access to ministries, cross-referenced group pictures for notable individuals,

carefully preserved historic prints in acid-free folders, and evaluated the collection for completeness. In review, a large number of period portraits and photos of sisters in various ministries were identified. They will be useful, refreshing new material for institution publications, orientation videos, and a variety of other patron needs.

Her survey of the collection also brought to light gaps in the collection for sisters currently living in Sacred Heart Province as well as for many of our sisters who are now in heaven. Since one of the Archives' goals is to document the community and ministries in Sacred Heart Province, we appeal to all sisters who can help us by asking you to forward extra black and white portraits and prints to the Archives. Accompanying negatives are especially treasured! We are always interested in photos of ministries, celebrations, and ceremonies, historic and contemporary, too. Although an unstable medium, select color prints are also sought. Color photography is much more common today so we collect color prints when they are what is available. We are grateful, and extend our thanks in advance, to all the sisters who are always so generous in helping us to document Sacred Heart Province's history.

1858 Customary Rules



"Gladly given to dear Sister Judith, with most sincere thanks for the immense amount of work done in connection with the origin of our Constitution, and best wishes for the success of future endeavors.

Lovingly, Mother Berenice, F.C.S.P., Superior General July 19, 1954."

Thus reads the inscription in a copy of Regles des Filles de la Charite, Servantes des Pauvres (Rules of the Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor) first printed in 1858. This historic volume, given to Sister Judith, S.P. (Sister Teresa Lang) in 1954, was recently donated to the Archives by Sister Roberta Rorke, S.P.

What are the Rules and why is the first printing so important? In 1843, Mother Emilie Gamelin visited the Sisters of Charity at Emmitsburg, Maryland and borrowed their rule of St. Vincent de Paul. This Vincentian rule was hand copied and became the original constitution and rules of the Sisters of Providence. From 1843-1858, these rules were adapted to mid-nineteenth century life and modified to meet the needs of the Sisters of Providence Community. When the Regles des Filles de la Charite, Servantes des Pauvres were first printed in 1858, they reflected the charism of Mother Emilie Gamelin and gave security to the young Community which grew up with changing regulations for 14 years.

For the Archives, this volume has great historical importance. It contains the original mandate for the Archives of the Sisters of Providence religious community. Chapter 52 contains 18 articles which outline the importance Archives. The first article reads, "There shall be in the Secretary and Treasurer's office, Archives which must be kept safe from fire and in

such good order that it may be easy to find any record." This mandate is as valid today as it was 135 years ago.

How did this volume come to the Archives? For some time, Mother Berenice, Superior General (1946 - 1958) felt that the Sisters would benefit greatly from knowledge of the history of their constitutions. Sister Judith was invited to research this history. After extensive research in the Archives at the Mother House, Sister Judith and Sister Dorothy Lentz, S.P. compiled the History of the Constitution of the Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor. In gratitude for her work, Sister Judith was presented with a copy of the 1858 Rules.

Late in the 1970's, Sister Roberta Rorke was appointed to assist in the revision of the Constitutions. At that time, Sister Teresa passed the text on to Sister Roberta. Since then, Sister Roberta has cherished this volume of the first printed Rules which she has now given to the Archives.

For the Archives, this 1858 first printed copy of the Rules is valuable for many reasons. First, because of its ownership. Secondly, because there are few extant copies. Most importantly for us, it provides the mandate for the establishment of the Archives. Sister Roberta's care of this volume will continue as it will be cherished in the Archives as an irreplaceable document of the history of the Sisters of Providence Religious Community and the Sisters of Providence Archives.

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