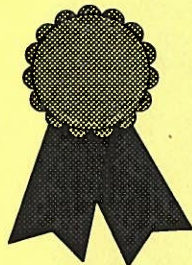

PAST FORWARD

The Newsletter of the Sisters of Providence Archives, Seattle

Winter 1997 Volume 5, Issue 4

Sappy Anniversary!

Congratulations to the following institutions which will be celebrating significant anniversaries in 1998:



Providence Alaska Medical Center, Anchorage: 60 years

Providence Extended Care Center, Anchorage: 15 years

Providence Centralia Hospital, Centralia: 10 years in the Sisters of Providence Health System

And for those of you who like to plan ahead:

2000: 200th Anniversary of the birth of Venerable Mother Emilie Gamelin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence

2001: 150th Anniversary of Mother Gamelin's death

2002: 100th Anniversary of the Death of Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart, foundress of the Sisters' ministry in the West

2006: 150th Anniversary of the Arrival of the Sisters in the West

2009: 150th Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Sisters of Providence ministries in Washington--the first SP corporation in the West ("Sisters of Charity of the House of Providence in the Territory of Washington")

It's going to be quite a decade!

THE PROCESSING PROCESS

In between researchers, telephone calls, and administrative functions, we have found time in 1997 to process a number of our collections. Processing includes appraising all the elements of a particular collection for their historical value, disposing of non-historical and duplicate materials, arranging the records in a logical order, filing in acid-free folders, and writing an inventory and guide to the collection.

Depending on the size and complexity, it can take a few hours or a few months to thoroughly examine and understand a collection. The installation of movable shelving and renovation of the Archives has made it much easier, since for the first time we are able to house all elements of a collection in one location.

Among the collections we have processed this year are: Mother Emilie Gamelin; Bishops; Mary; SP Spirituality; Providence Associates; Office of the Chronicles; Our Lady of Seven Dolours School, Tulalip, Washington; and other small institutions. This work is one of the key elements of the Archival profession. We are pleased to make the final inventories available to researchers, and welcome your inquiries about these or other collections.

IN MEMORIAM

**SISTER EVELYN BERGAMINI, SP
1910-1997**

Please remember Sister Evelyn, sister of Sister Rita Bergamini, Archivist Assistant, in your prayers. She was a great friend and benefactor of the Archives, and we will miss her.

DID YOU KNOW THAT. . .

...besides being skilled in carpentry, administration, and finance, Mother Joseph also made fine wax figurines?

Among the most beautiful examples of her work are the wax sculptures of the Infant Jesus. These delicate, life-like figures were an integral part of the sisters' Christmas celebrations, forming the centerpiece of the Nativity crèche. The Archives has several of Mother Joseph's "wax babies" as well as some made by other Sisters of Providence.

Also in the Archives is Mother Joseph's notebook with her "recipe" for the figures: "1 pound wax, 1½ pounds white of whale, ½ spoon of almond oil per pound, a little Flake White to whiten the wax a little, a little vermilion enclosed in a piece of muslin. (Add until you find the color good.) . . . [After molding] let it stand for about ten minutes; then take out your Child Jesus and wipe it with fine muslin. Scrape it with a knife and wash it with warm soapy water. When it is dry, powder it with Flake White mixed with a little carmine. Use more carmine for the cheeks; equal amounts of Flake White and carmine for the mouth; Flake White, carmine and vermilion for the eyebrows; and the same color for the hair. Before painting the hair, place a little beef bile on the wax. Take a little ivory-black and more yellow ochre. Put a little lead sugar in the paint to make it dry."

The recipe mentions painted hair, but most of the figurines have real hair, snipped from the curly blond locks of children at Providence Academy, Vancouver, Washington.

Mother Joseph began by making candles at the Mother House. In March 1848, she was assigned to assist with the molding of wax infants, which were sold to support the sisters' ministries in Montreal. Mother Joseph continued to make wax infants throughout her life. Her creations became very popular and were requested by churches and

families throughout the Pacific Northwest. Her molds, wax samples, and tools--as well as one of the infants--can be seen in the historical exhibits at the System Office. Other infants are still used by the sisters and in the institutions at Christmas.

In 1894, a year before her death at age 28, Sister Claire of Jesus wrote to her mother from Vancouver: "*Our good Mother Joseph is making the most beautiful wax Infant Jesus. When she has them finished, she brings them to my bedside for me to see. They are really lovely. I wish the children could see one. And at her age, seventy-four, she embroiders the little dresses for them. The finest kind of work. It is really wonderful.*"



**Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Year!**

For more information about the Archives contact:
Sisters of Providence Archives
4800 37th Avenue Southwest, Seattle, WA 98126
(206) 937-4600

Loretta Greene, Archivist; Terri Mitchell, Assistant Archivist; Sister Rita Bergamini, SP, Archivist Assistant