



PAST FORWARD

The Newsletter of the Sisters of Providence Archives, Seattle

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Picture Perfect Pastels

Strokes of black and white chalk mixing to produce gentle hues of the sisters' traditional habit... swirls of color blending to create the elegant robes of a bishop or a pastoral scene of a moonlit forest floor... wisps of green and purple blending to a perfect skin tone... These are some of the techniques seen in the pastel collection stored in the Archives.

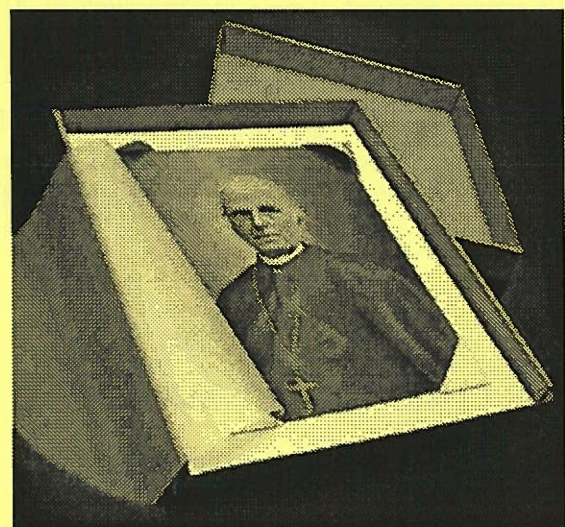
Although this is a small collection numbering 27 items, it dates from the late 1880s to current times. Conservators have judged it as "a very fine collection." Artists for the earlier pieces are unknown, but several of the contemporary pieces are by prolific artists well-known within the Sisters of Providence community: Sister Vincent of Foligno; Sister Marie Blanche Thibault (a self-taught artist in watercolor, oil and pastel); and Sister Louise Lyng.

Among the more important pieces are life-like black and white portraits of Mother Joseph; the five foundresses of the Northwest; Sister Ottilia (a nurse for 50 years); and a vibrant color portrait of Bishop Edward O'Dea, third bishop of the Diocese of Seattle

Until recently, these pastels were wrapped in folders or linen and resting on shelves. In several cases, the fragile paper is attached to a hardboard backing, or attached to linen and framed on stretchers, then covered with loose glass. Some, almost 100 years old, had been torn and smudged. How were we to handle these beauties without damaging them further? The time had come to have the pastels evaluated

and proper storage boxes professionally prepared.

A contact from the Conservation Associates of the Pacific Northwest led us to Alice Bear, a local conservator of works of art on paper. Alice used foam core to design a frame in which each pastel rests within an archival storage box. The frame limits the movement of the pastel and enables us to easily handle each pastel without touching it. Pastels not on stretchers are covered with glassine to prevent dust settling on the face of the pastel and to protect the chalk from smudging. Alice also provided a conservation report for each piece so that appropriate preservation activities can be planned in the future. She was so taken with a still-life by Sister Marie Blanche that she repaired its damaged edges as a Christmas gift to the Archives!

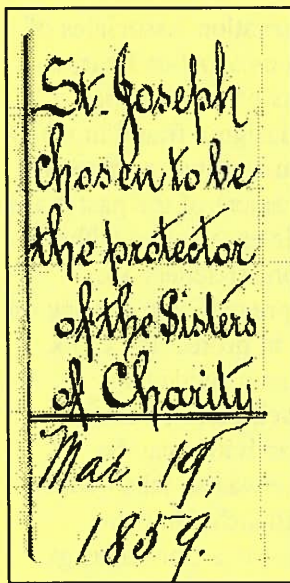


Bishop A.M.A. Blanchet, first Bishop of the Diocese of Nesqually (later Seattle), safely boxed under glassine.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

Hank Walker is not the only president who guides the affairs of the Sisters of Providence Health System?

On March 19, 1859, the day reserved by the Church to honor the guardian-father of Jesus, St. Joseph was named the "spiritual president" of the newly incorporated Sisters of Charity of the House of Providence in the Territory of Washington. Acting on behalf of the new corporation, Mother Joseph, President, and Sister Blandine, Secretary, signed the declaration appointing St. Joseph "the protector and guardian of all our works, our property, and all our business transactions." In exchange, the sisters promised to "maintain forever a poor person under the name, and holding the place of St. Joseph."



As their spiritual president and financial guardian, St. Joseph was invoked many times in the correspondence of Mother Joseph, the sisters, priests and bishops. He was called upon to grant favors for safe travel, protection from floods, delivery of mail across the continent, successful fund raising, healing of the sick, additional sisters to work in the missions, and favorable real estate transactions. To this day, each Wednesday is set aside for devotions in his honor.

As their ministries grew and flourished, the sisters expressed their gratitude to their spiritual and financial guardian by giving his name to several institutions: St. Joseph Hospital, Vancouver, WA (1858); Providence St. Joseph School, Steilacoom, WA (1863); St. Joseph Academy, Yakima, WA (1875); St. Joseph Hospital, Fairbanks, AK (1910); St. Joseph Hospital, Burbank, CA (1942); and St. Joseph Residence, Seattle, WA (1966).

The sisters recount many ways in which St. Joseph has protected them and their works, and they have always remained faithful to their commitment to him. Today, the Provincial Council acknowledges the promise made by Mother Joseph by subsidizing care for an elderly person at Providence Mount St. Vincent, Seattle. And in the Health System office, a statue of St. Joseph watches over the work of the Finance Department, while a pencil-sketch of St. Joseph, borrowed from the Archives, hangs in Hank Walker's office.



COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE...

CELEBRITY MATCH GAME

DON'T MISS IT!



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