

# Holy Rosary School (Moxee, Washington) records

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## *Collection Finding Aid*

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## OVERVIEW OF RECORDS

**Repository:** Providence Archives, Mother Joseph Province, Seattle, Washington

**Creator:** Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province; Holy Rosary School's staff and students

**Record Group Name:** Holy Rosary School, Moxee, Washington

**Record Group Number:** 133

**Dates:** 1912-2000

**Scope and Content:** The Holy Rosary School collection comprises primarily chronicles, unpublished histories, and correspondence, with a smaller amount of supporting materials and local community records. Records date from 1912 to 2000, with the bulk from 1915 to 1968. Of particular depth is the correspondence, which details ongoing negotiations between the religious community and the parish regarding financial matters and staffing, as well as the sisters' decision to withdraw from the school. Most of the standard record series are represented, although incomplete.

**Extent:** Approximately 1.5 linear feet.

## HISTORICAL NOTE

**Abstract:** The Yakima Valley town of Moxee, Washington, was settled by French-Canadian farmers, so the Sisters of Providence felt right at home when they opened Holy Rosary School in 1915. The feeling was mutual: twenty-one girls from Moxee entered the religious community. The school closed in 1968, but two sisters continued to serve the parish into the 1990s.

The seeds of Holy Rosary School, Moxee, Washington, were planted shortly after the arrival in the late 1890s of a group of Catholic farming families with French Canadian roots. These settlers traveled together by train from their homes in Crookston, Minnesota, to the fertile Moxee Valley in central Washington. Within a few years, they built Holy Rosary Church and a parish hall, and established a Catholic cemetery. The first resident pastor was assigned to Holy Rosary Parish in 1906, fulfilling the parishioners' ardent desire for daily Mass and access to the sacraments.

By 1912, the Moxee Valley was home to a thriving farming community, and the Catholic church and hall had been moved to a new location in the small commercial center, known as Moxee City. Over the years, the pastor and parishioners discussed their desire to open a Catholic school to serve the growing number of young families. In 1912, land was purchased, and the Sisters of Providence were asked to staff the school. Despite the support of many parishioners, work on the school did not begin until 1915, when the Reverend William Chaput accepted the pastorship of Holy Rosary Church on the condition that a school be built. A two-day pledge drive raised the necessary funds, and construction began almost immediately. Much of the labor and building materials were donated by parishioners. The three-story school had four classrooms, several music rooms, a parlor, chapel, dining hall, kitchen, two dormitories for boarding students, and accommodations for the sisters.

On September 25, 1915, seven Sisters of Providence arrived in Moxee: Sister Catherine of Genoa, Superior; Sisters Mary Maurice, Mary Loyola, Brendan, Mary Pius, George Arthur, teachers; and Sister Mary Cyrilla, who served as seamstress and housekeeper. Two lay teachers, Catherine McLaughlin and Valery Nibler, completed the faculty for the first year.

The classrooms were not quite finished when school opened September 29, 1915. Eight girls enrolled in the high school, and 173 girls and boys in grades one through eight. There were twenty-five boarders, most living at the school during the week and returning home on weekends. Many of the children, particularly the younger students, spoke French as their primary language, and most had never seen a religious sister before. Although not all the sisters spoke French, they did share the parishioners' French Canadian heritage and traditions, and strong bonds were soon forged between the Sisters of Providence and the Moxee community.

Throughout its history, Holy Rosary School was free to all students in the parish, in both the grade school and the high school. This no-tuition policy was made possible by the commitment of the parishioners and the relatively low salaries required by the sisters, but it meant that the school was in constant financial difficulty. Donations of produce, meat, and coal helped the sisters and their boarders to survive, especially during the Depression.

The boarding department closed in 1933, and the following year, public school bus transportation became available to the students at Holy Rosary. The high school received full accreditation for the first time in 1936. Still, enrollment in the high school never exceeded thirty-five students, and sometimes fell below the six students per grade required for accreditation. Therefore, with the support of the Most Reverend Joseph P. Dougherty, first Bishop of the Diocese of Yakima, the decision was made to close the high school in 1957. Although this decision was difficult for the parishioners, they took pride in knowing that their small parish had provided free Catholic secondary education for more than forty years; during this time, 195 girls graduated from the high school.

The grade school continued for another decade, with enrollment remaining steady at about 180 students. After the closure of the high school, only four sisters were assigned to the school. They continued to divide the classes as they had always done, with each sister taking two grades (one and two, three and four, etc.) in one classroom. Occasionally, a lay teacher or another sister was available to relieve the classroom teachers or to offer extra classes such as music. In the 1960s, with fewer young sisters available as replacements, it became impossible for the sisters to maintain this schedule. The religious community asked that at least one lay teacher be hired on a permanent, full-time basis, but the various pastors found it difficult to comply because of the additional financial burden on the parish.

Several years of discussion and negotiation ensued, with no resolution. Finally, in 1967, parishioners conducted an extensive review of the physical plant, finances, and options for the school, and concluded that it would be impossible to maintain the school in the present circumstances. Arrangements were made for students to enroll in the Catholic schools in Yakima, if desired, and Holy Rosary School closed on June 7, 1968.

Closure of the school did not bring the end of the Sisters of Providence ministry in Moxee. In September 1968, at the request of the Reverend John Shaw, Pastor, three semi-retired sisters took up residence in a house near the church, donated for their use by Mr. and Mrs. Albert Gamache. The sisters' goal was to establish a religious education program, to make home visits, and to continue the Providence presence in the community. Only Sister Anna Clare Duggar was well enough for active ministry, however, and the other sisters soon retired to Seattle, Washington. In 1971, Sister Anna Clare was joined by Sister Ann Clementine Regimbal, a native of Moxee and alumna of Holy Rosary School. Together, the two sisters faithfully served the people of Moxee for the remainder of their lives. (Sister Anna Clare passed away December 31, 1994, and Sister Ann on January 13, 1997.)

sponsorship information, and what existing histories might be helpful to researchers.

## ARRANGEMENT

The record group is divided into nine series: *history, administration, personnel, local community, curriculum, financial, property, reports, and subject series.*

## ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

**Restrictions:** Providence Archives is a private repository. Access to some records is at the

discretion of the archivist.

**Preferred Citation:** [Title of cited item]. [Series Name]. Holy Rosary School, Moxee, Washington. Record Group 133. Providence Archives, Seattle, Washington.

**Acquisition Information:** Records were transferred to the Archives from the Sisters of Providence Provincial Administration or from sisters at the school over a period of years. Additional materials were donated by Harriett Desmarais (accession 2001:59).

**Related Record Groups and Other Collections:** A property survey drawn in September 1919 by Sister Anatolie is found in the oversize ledger entitled Inventaires des Immeubles de la Province du Sacre-Coeur (Inventory of Buildings of Sacred Heart Province).

The records of the education apostolate and the Education Division of Sacred Heart Province contain related correspondence, reports, and the annual "school bulletin," a detailed record of enrollment statistics, student involvement in ancillary groups (e.g. Sodality, safety patrol), and special programs (music, vocational preparation, etc.).

Details of the sisters' various ministries in Moxee from 1974 to 1997 can be found in the Chronicles of the Yakima and Moxee Region (1974-1986) and the Chronicles of the Providence Local Community (1986-1997).

See separate index for articles printed in the periodicals Caritas, Providence Sister, and The Good Work, published by the Sisters of Providence, Sacred Heart Province.

**Processing Information:** Records arranged and described by Terri Mitchell, Assistant Archivist in 2001. A small number of photographs, films, and artifacts are housed and catalogued separately.

## BOX AND FOLDER LIST

### History

This series features two sets of chronicles; they are brief, but well-written and interesting. All are in English. The first set spans the years 1915 to 1974, and includes details of the sisters' catechetical ministry in Moxee for several years after the school closed. The second set spans 1915 to 1967.

Supplementing the chronicles is a 39-page unpublished history of the school (1915-1950), written by Sister Anna Clare Duggar (3076) in the early 1950s. Sister Anna Clare spent much of the 1930s and 1940s in Moxee, and this history was completed as part of her coursework for a Master's Degree in History at Seattle University, Seattle, Washington. It features a well-documented narrative, drawn from primary sources and interviews, as well as photographs and drawings of the buildings and significant persons. (See Subject Series: Holy Rosary Parish for Sister Anna Clare's companion history of the parish.)

This series also includes several brief historical summaries and a file on the closure of the high school in 1957. Two files on the closure of the grade school in 1968 supplement the correspondence on this topic (see below): the School Evaluation Report documents parishioners' involvement in studying and developing options for continuation or closure, while the "general" folder contains announcements and newsclippings on the closure.

Box	Folder	Title
1	v1	Chronicles, 1915-1952 (set 1)
1	v2	Chronicles, 1952-1975 (set 1)
2	v1	Chronicles, 1915-1941 (set 2)
2	v2	Chronicles, 1941-1967 (set 2)
2	1	Closure of High School, 1957
2	2	Closure of Grade School, School Evaluation Report, 1968
2	3	Closure of Grade School, General, 1968
2	4	"Holy Rosary School, 1915-1950," by Sister Anna Clare Duggar, c. 1950 (copy 1)
2	5	"Holy Rosary School, 1915-1950," by Sister Anna Clare Duggar, c. 1950 (copy 2)
2	6	Brief Histories

### Administration

This series is composed of correspondence; an agreement with the parish (1939); and a one-page summary of the administrative relationship between the diocese, parish, religious community, principal, and local superior.

The first folder contains the 1912 foundation request letter from the Reverend S.J. Arsenault, Pastor of Holy Rosary Church. The other correspondence was accessioned in three separate, but overlapping folders from the provincial administration of Sacred Heart Province, and this order has been retained. The correspondence is primarily between the pastors of Holy Rosary Parish and the provincial superiors of Sacred Heart Province, or between the provincial superiors and the local superiors. It is quite frank and adds an interesting dimension to the history recorded in the chronicles, particularly regarding the relationship between the parish and religious community over the years. Financial and staffing difficulties are well documented, as are the negotiations leading to closure of the school.

Key correspondents are the Most Reverend Joseph P. Dougherty, first Bishop of the Diocese of Yakima, Washington; the Reverend Henry B. Conrad, OMI, and Edward T. McHugh, OMI, Pastors; Mother Mary Philothea, Mother Judith, and Sister Cecilia Abhold, Provincial Superiors; and Sister

Jeanne Marie, Director of Schools, Sacred Heart Province.

Box	Folder	Title
3	1	Correspondence, Foundation Request, 1912
3	2	Correspondence, Provincial Administration, 1918-1959
3	3	Correspondence, Provincial Administration, 1960s
3	4	Correspondence, General, 1953-1961
3	5	Agreement with Parish, 1939
3	6	General

### Personnel

Faculty records include a list of all the sisters and lay teachers, by year, 1915-1968, with high school, grammar school, and primary school enrollment statistics, and miscellaneous biographical information on Sister Anna Clare and other teachers. (See Local Community: Superiors for a list of house superiors, who also served as school principal.) There is also a folder of thank-you cards made by students for Harriett Desmarais, during her tenure as a teacher's aide in the mid-1960s.

Student records include lists of high school graduates (complete), high school students (incomplete), and students who entered the Sisters of Providence religious community. As of 1983, the official student records (transcripts) were stored in the basement of Holy Rosary Parish rectory.

Box	Folder	Title
3	7	Faculty, Sisters/Lay
3	8	Teacher's Aid, Harriett Desmarais, 1960s
3	9	Students, Students/Alumnae
3	10	Students, Transcript Requests

### Local Community

This series documents the governance and administration of the convent (local community). The records are incomplete, but include a list of house superiors, the local council Acts of Council (non-financial), minutes of the annual visitation of the provincial superior (proces verbal), the trimestrial (quarterly) report required by the religious community, and the sisters' daily schedule (horarium).

Box	Folder	Title
3	11	Superiors, 1915-1967
3	12	Local Council Acts of Council, 1936, 1947
3	13	Proces Verbal, 1938-1967
3	14	Trimestrial Report, 1965-1967
3	15	Horarium, 1963-1967

### Curriculum

This series is limited to a small selection of sheet music and hymnals used at the school, including *Laudis Corona*, the *New Sunday School Hymn Book* (Sadlier, 1885). Each of the four pieces is marked with the school's name.

Box	Folder	Title
3	16	Music

### Financial

The only records in this series are an incomplete set of local council Acts of Council regarding loans and purchases (1921-1961), and an account ledger for student music lessons (1921-1927). Genealogical information in the account ledger is limited to name of student, parent, and town of residence.

Box	Folder	Contents
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3	17	Local Council Acts of Council, 1921-1961
3	18	Student Accounts (Music Lessons), 1921-1927

### Property

This series documents receipt and disposition of property donated in 1956 by Victor and Ida Lenseigne, of Moxee, for the purpose of building a convent next to the school.

Box	Folder	Title
3	19	Lenseigne Quit Claim Deed, 1956-1960

### Reports

The Personnel and Works Reports and Semi-Annual and Annual Financial Reports are bound together in one volume. These give complete statistics (sisters, pupils, alms, etc.) and financial summaries (income, expenses, loans, etc.) for the period 1915-1953. Also found in this series are a few brief school reports and evaluations (1928, 1960s).

Box	Folder	Title
3	20	Personnel and Works/Semi-Annual and Annual Financial Report, 1915-1953
3	21	Miscellaneous Evaluation/Reports, 1928, 1960s

### Subject Series

The folders in this series are arranged in alphabetical order. Of particular note are a 45-page unpublished history of Holy Rosary Parish (1896-1950), written by Sister Anna Clare Duggar in the 1950s, and anniversary publications prepared for the silver jubilee of the school (1940) and the diamond jubilee of the parish (1975). Sister Anna Clare's narrative is drawn from primary sources, personal knowledge, and interviews, and includes photographs of Moxee, parish buildings, priests, sisters, and parishioners. The silver jubilee booklet includes a history of the parish and school, a list of students who entered religious life, and photographs of the sister superiors, pastors, and high school graduates (1915-1940). Although focused on the parish, the diamond jubilee publication does mention the school, individual sisters, and students, and includes many interesting photographs.

Box	Folder	Title
4	1	Anniversary, 25th, 1940
4	2	Anniversary, 50th, 1965
4	3	Benefactors
4	4	Cornerstone, 1915
4	5	Fire Destroys School, 1974
4	6	"Holy Rosary Parish, 1897-1950," by Sister Anna Clare Duggar, c. 1950
4	7	Holy Rosary Parish, Diamond Jubilee, 1975
4	8	Holy Rosary Parish, Centennial, 2000
4	9	Holy Rosary Parish, Parish Center, 1979
4	10	Professional Teachers Meeting, 1953
4	11	Stationery