

# Sacred Heart School (Tacoma, 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; Sacred Heart School students and staff

**Record Group Name:** Sacred Heart School, Tacoma, Washington

**Record Group Number:** 149

**Dates:** 1929-1987

**Scope and Content:** This collection comprises primarily chronicles, correspondence, local community records, and financial files, with a small amount of supporting materials. Records date from 1929 to 1987, with the bulk from 1929 to 1970. The history, curriculum, reports, and subject series contain some information on student activities and the academic program, but the majority of records focus on the sisters' community life.

**Extent:** Approximately 1.66 linear feet (5 document boxes)

## HISTORICAL NOTE

Abstract: Sisters of Providence taught at Sacred Heart School, their only school in Tacoma, from 1929 to 1970. Several graduates entered the religious community, and for many years the sisters enjoyed a warm relationship with the parish. When the sisters could no longer staff the school, Sister Cecilia Abhold, Provincial Superior, conveyed their gratitude to the parents: "We leave rich with memories of the good people of McKinley Hill and their many sacrifices for the Catholic education of their children."

Sacred Heart Parish was established in 1912 to serve the working-class McKinley Hill neighborhood of Tacoma. Shortly after his appointment as pastor in 1923, the Reverend Robert Ryan constructed a two-story brick building next to the church and began searching for a religious community to open a parish school. In the spring of 1929, when the Sisters of Providence accepted administration of the Ozanam Nursing Home, their first ministry in Tacoma, Father Ryan asked them to consider staffing the school as well. The sisters were happy to be able to take on this new institution as a companion to the nursing home.

Sacred Heart School opened September 3, 1929, with eighty-nine students enrolled in grades one through seven. Five sisters were assigned to the school: Sister Louis Angela, Superior; Xavier of Jesus, Principal and grades six and seven; Eugenia of Providence, grades three through five; Noreen of Providence, grades one and two, and Rose of Jesus, music teacher. The four classrooms were on the first floor of the building, with the parish hall upstairs serving as auditorium and music room.

The sisters lived in the house previously occupied by the pastor, right next door to the school. It was furnished by generous donations from parishioners and from the sisters' institutions throughout the province. The financial situation in the parish was difficult, but a bazaar was quickly organized to raise funds for the school, and the women hosted a food shower for the sisters, a tradition that continued each fall for forty years. This was especially appreciated during the time of the Great Depression, when the sisters were well aware of the sacrifices made by the parishioners to see that the convent pantry was stocked for the year.

During the first decade, enrollment grew slowly, finally passing 150 students in 1939. The eight grades were still housed in four classrooms until 1943, when a sudden jump to 235 students required use of a makeshift classroom on the auditorium stage. Enrollment continued to grow steadily in the post-war years, and in 1948, the auditorium was converted entirely to classrooms for the fifth through eighth grades. For the first time, each grade had its own classroom and teacher. In the fall of 1949, a new wing was added to the convent to accommodate the ten sisters assigned to the school.

The 1950s were a time of growth and stability for Sacred Heart Parish. A new church was constructed in 1954, and enrollment in the school grew to nearly 400. From the beginning, music and sports were an important part of school life, and Sacred Heart was well known for its annual recitals and operettas. The children were also active participants in religious activities, such as the Holy Childhood Association. The sisters taught religious education classes each week for public school students, coordinated an annual religious vacation school during the summer, directed the Sodality of Our Lady for high school girls in the parish, and later were active in the training of lay catechists.

Sacred Heart School was also home to the Tacoma chapter of the Providence Auxiliary, an organization established by parents of individual sisters to give spiritual and financial aid to the community, particularly for the education of the young sisters. The members, known as Patrons of Providence, participated actively through meetings and fund-raisers, or through prayers and personal donations to the Auxiliary, which had chapters throughout the province. The Tacoma chapter was established on December 8, 1956, the centenary of the arrival of the Sisters of Providence in the northwest, and was active through 1962. Its membership included mothers and close relatives of several sisters who had attended Sacred Heart School, as well as other friends of the Sisters of Providence in the Tacoma area.

Construction of a new convent began in 1963, and the sisters happily moved to the comfortable, modern residence on April 15, 1964. Still, the school remained essentially unchanged from 1948, with no cafeteria, auditorium, or library, and little space to implement the creative teaching methods being introduced in other schools. The sisters found it difficult to maintain their standards of education, but the parish was not able to fund the necessary improvements. In the mid-1960s, enrollment began to decline rather quickly, as did the number of sisters available for teaching assignments, both factors adding to the financial deficit.

As in other Catholic communities, it was difficult for some of the parishioners to accept the post-Vatican II changes adopted by the church and by the sisters. Introduction of the new diocesan-approved religion curriculum, "Come to the Father," in 1968 (replacing the traditional Baltimore Catechism) was particularly divisive. Conflicts within the parish magnified the sisters' concerns about the financial and academic stability of the school.

For the 1969-1970 school year, only three sisters were available for Sacred Heart School, and for the first time it was necessary to hire a lay principal; five lay teachers completed the faculty for the 230 students. When discussion and negotiation failed to resolve growing disagreements about the sisters' future role at Sacred Heart School, the religious community decided to take a leave of absence for one year, after which they would return if requested by the parish. On June 7, 1970, after completing their responsibilities for the school year, the sisters moved from the convent.

Sacred Heart School remained open for another decade, staffed by lay people and an occasional sister from other religious communities. After its closure in 1980, the new pastor, the Reverend John Jennings, invited Sister Louise Gleason to serve as his assistant and to coordinate the religious education program. The return of a Sister of Providence was difficult for some parishioners but welcomed by others, and Sister Louise's ministry over the next three years helped bring a measure of reconciliation between the parish and the religious community.

## ARRANGEMENT

The record group is divided into 10 series: *history, administration, personnel, local community, curriculum, financial, facility, reports, Providence Auxiliary, 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]. Sacred Heart School, Tacoma, Washington. Record Group 149. Providence Archives, Seattle, Washington.

**Acquisition Information:** Records were transferred to Providence Archives, Seattle from Sacred Heart School's staff.

**Related Record Groups and Other Collections:** The following record groups also contain information relating to this collection: Sacred Heart Province Provincial Administration records, St. Ignatius Province Provincial Administration records, Sister Personnel records, and Washington Corporation records. Other collections are cross referenced within the relevant portions of the collection.

In addition to the paper records, Providence Archives holds a photograph collection and artifact collection.

**Processing Information:** Records arranged and described by Terri Mitchell, Assistant Archivist; completed on December 13, 2000.

## BOX AND FOLDER LIST

### History

This series includes the chronicles and several brief histories of the school's foundation. The two sets of chronicles are bound in five volumes, all in English, spanning the sisters' entire tenure at the school, July 1, 1929, to June 7, 1970. They are well written and offer a good summary of school activities and the activities of the sisters, particularly from 1929 to 1959. The entries for the 1960s are relatively brief and add little to our understanding of the events leading to the sisters' withdrawal from the school.

Box	Folder	Title
1	-	Chronicles, 1929-1970 (2 sets)
2	1	Brief Histories, 1929-1936

### Administration

The administration series is primarily correspondence, with three additional documents: 1) the original, signed 1929 agreement with the parish regarding the sisters' salaries and responsibilities; 2) the 1939 contract renewal; and 3) a 1967 policy regarding homework.

The correspondence comprises thirteen folders in two discrete units: eight folders of administrative correspondence regarding Sacred Heart School, and a larger unit of circular letters from the Diocese of Seattle. The administrative correspondence consists of the original foundation request and approval documents (1929); letters between the various pastors of Sacred Heart Parish and the Provincial Superiors and members of the Education Board of Sacred Heart Province (1934-1969), primarily regarding staffing and financial arrangements; appointment letters and other correspondence between the Provincial Superior and the Superior of the school (1932-1968); general correspondence (1940-1960); and letters from various correspondents regarding the sisters' withdrawal from the school (1970-1971). Key correspondents include the Reverend R.J. Ryan and A.H. Allard, Pastors, and Sister Laretta Frawley, Executive Secretary, Education Division of Sacred Heart Province.

The second unit of correspondence consists of mimeographed circular letters to the schools of the Diocese of Seattle from various diocesan offices. Each of these folders contains a few personalized letters to Sacred Heart School, but the majority are copies of letters sent to each parochial school. The letters from Bishop Gerald Shaughnessy (1935-1949) and Archbishop Thomas A. Connolly (1948-1967) cover a variety of topics, such as recommended films, vocation promotion, and charitable campaigns. A larger set of circular letters from the Diocesan Superintendents of Schools, the Reverend Edward J. McFadden (1936-1947) and Philip H. Duffy (1947-1961), address some of these same topics, but also cover the standard curriculum, student testing, diocesan policies and programs, and war-time activities. Finally, a set of letters from various directors of the Holy Childhood Association of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith (1935-1961) details the involvement of the schools in raising funds for the missions through the symbolic adoption of "pagan babies."

Box	Folder	Title
2	2	Correspondence, Foundation Request/Approval, 1929
2	3	Correspondence, Pastor/Provincial Superior, 1934-1966
2	4	Correspondence, Appointments made by Provincial Council, 1932-1954
2	5	Correspondence, Provincial Superior, 1932-1968
2	6	Correspondence, General, 1940-1966
2	7	Correspondence, Education Board, 1967-1969
2	8	Correspondence, Announcement of Decision to Withdraw, 1970
2	9	Correspondence, Withdrawal from School, 1970-1971

2	10	Circular Letters, Diocese of Seattle, Bishop Gerald Shaughnessy, 1935-1949
2	11	Circular Letters, Diocese of Seattle, Archbishop Thomas A. Connolly, 1948-1967
2	12	Circular Letters, Diocesan Superintendent of Schools, The Reverend E.J. McFadden, 1938-1947
2	13-14	Circular Letters, Diocesan Superintendent of Schools, The Reverend Philip H. Duffy, 1947-1961
2	15	Circular Letters, Holy Childhood Association, 1935-1961
2	16	Agreement with Parish, 1929, 1939
2	17	Homework Policy, 1967

### Personnel

Personnel records are scanty, and include only a list of the Sisters of Providence who served at the school (compiled by archives staff); biographical data sheets for the lay faculty members, 1966-1968; and a student roster from 1969-1970. There are no official faculty or student records in the collection.

Box	Folder	Title
2	18	Sisters, 1929-1970
2	19	Faculty, 1966-1968
2	20	Students, 1969-1970

### Local Community

Local community records, which concern the governance and administration of the convent (local community), include an incomplete list of local superiors; an administrative manual (1964); minutes of the local chapter meetings and annual visits of the provincial superior (proces verbal); miscellaneous correspondence and reports required by the religious community; the sisters' daily schedule (horarium); and an inventory of books in the convent library.

Box	Folder	Title
3	1	Superiors, List, 1964-1970
3	2	Superiors, Manual, 1964
3	3	Local Chapter, 1934-1958
3	4	Proces Verbal, 1929-1958
3	5	Proces Verbal, 1938-1968
3	6	Correspondence, Confessor Appointments, 1932-1967
3	7	Correspondence, Permission to Travel Requests, 1964-1967
3	8	Correspondence, General, 1965-1969
3	9	Quinquennial Report, 1956-1965
3	10	Trimestrial Report, 1964-1967
3	11	Horarium, 1960-1967
3	12	Address Book, 1960s
3	13	Library Accession Register

### Curriculum

Curriculum records are limited to two folders, one containing daily schedules for grades one through six, 1964-1965, and the other containing lists of approved textbooks for 1954 and 1965-1967.

Box	Folder	Title
4	1	Daily Schedules, 1964-1965
4	2	Textbooks, 1954, 1965-1967

### Financial

Financial records include the deliberations of the local council (the governing body made up of the local superior, her assistant, the house treasurer, and appointed sister councilors), which are

primarily a record of the monthly meetings in which the financial account books were reviewed and approved. Two ledgers of receipts and expenses, 1929-1947, document the sisters' salaries, living expenses, gifts, and receipts from music lessons. (See Related Materials for location of duplicate ledgers.) Also found here are an incomplete set of provincial and local council Acts of Council regarding loans and purchases; three internal audit reports; and miscellaneous correspondence and documents related to bank accounts, insurance, and budget.

Box	Folder	Title
4	3	Deliberations of the Local Council, 1929-1947, 1965
4	4	Local Council Acts of Council, 1929-1968
4	5	Annual Report of Religious, Diocese of Seattle, 1941-1950
4	6	Bank Account, 1950-1965
4	7	Correspondence from Provincial Treasurer, 1956-1968
4	8	Audit Report, 1958, 1960, 1964
4	9	Excise Tax Exemption Forms/Letters, 1959, 1966
4	10	Insurance Report, 1962-1963
4	11	Budget, 1968-1969
4	12	Expense/Receipt Ledgers, 1929-1938
4	13	Expense/Receipt Ledgers, 1938-1947

### Facility

This series includes only a few miscellaneous documents regarding the new convent (occupied in 1964) and household equipment and supplies.

Box	Folder	Title
4	14	Convent, 1964-1970

### Reports

This series contains an incomplete Criteria for Evaluation of Catholic Elementary Schools, as formulated by the National Catholic Educational Association and completed during the 1968-1969 school year. Found here are the sections relating to school philosophy and objectives; student and family demographics; health and physical education curriculum; science curriculum; and the physical plant. This self-assessment tool was completed by the faculty and selected parents as part of a province-wide evaluation program.

A complete set of the Personnel and Works/Semi-Annual and Annual Financial Reports, compiled for the religious community, provide valuable statistical and financial data from 1929 to 1963, and statistical data only from 1964 to 1970. Also in this series are an analysis of student test scores, 1965, and several brief reports or evaluations from the 1960s.

Box	Folder	Title
4	15	Personnel and Works/Semi-Annual and Annual Financial Report, 1929-1963
4	16	Personnel and Works/Semi-Annual and Annual Financial Report, 1964-1969
4	17	Criteria for Evaluation of Catholic Elementary Schools, 1968-1969
4	18	Miscellaneous Reports/Evaluations, 1960s

### Providence Auxiliary

The records of the Tacoma chapter of the Providence Auxiliary, based at Sacred Heart School, include correspondence, membership lists, event programs and newspaper clippings, and a financial ledger. These records span the period 1956-1962, when the chapter was active.

Box	Folder	Title
5	1	Correspondence, 1958-1961
5	2	Patrons, 1958-1961
5	3	Teas, 1956-1960

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5	4	Bazaars, 1959, 1961
5	5	Newsclippings, 1957-1960
5	6	Financial, 1957-1962

**Subject Series**

The five folders in this series are arranged in alphabetical order. Of interest are the programs from two of the school's annual spring operettas (1932, 1942) and reports of the annual Religious Vacation Schools conducted by the sisters (1959-1964). The other topics are: Benefactors, which includes several lists of donors and gifts; Reunion of the class of 1957 in 2007; Sacred Heart Church, featuring memorabilia from its seventy-fifth anniversary in 1987; and Vocation Promotion, which contains an undated "vocation issue" of the school newsletter and a description of the Gamelin Club initiated by the eighth-grade girls in 1951 to foster religious vocations.

Box	Folder	Title
5	7	Benefactors, 1948, 1958-1967
5	8	Religious Vacation School, 1959-1964
5	9	Reunion, 2007
5	9	Sacred Heart Church/Parish
5	10	Spring Programs, 1932, 1942
5	11	Vocation Promotion, 1950s