

St. Finbar School (Burbank, California) records

Collection Finding Aid

Contents

Overview of Records	2
Historical Note	2
Arrangement	3
Administrative Information	3
Box and Folder List	4
History	4
Administration	4
Personnel	4
Local Community	4
Financial.....	5
Reports	5
Publications	5
Subject Series.....	5

OVERVIEW OF RECORDS

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

Creator: Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province; St. Finbar School's students and staff

Record Group Name: St. Finbar School, Burbank, California

Record Group Number: 181

Dates: 1945-1995

Scope and Content: This collection comprises primarily chronicles, foundation documents, and administrative correspondence, with a limited amount of supporting materials. Records date from 1945 to 1995, with the bulk from 1953 to 1974. Of particular depth and interest is the correspondence, which includes detailed reports from the principal on the early years of the school, the relationship with the pastor, and the community life of the sisters. The historical material and correspondence reflect the first three decades of the sisters' service at the school; local community records begin only in 1953, when the sisters moved into the school convent.

Extent: Approximately 1.25 linear feet

HISTORICAL NOTE

Abstract: Shortly after opening Saint Joseph Hospital in Burbank, California, the Sisters of Providence were invited to staff a new elementary school in the neighboring St. Finbar Parish. The first classes were held in large open tents and in the church until construction of the school was complete. Sisters of Providence continued to teach at the school until 1984.

St. Finbar Parish, Burbank, California, was erected October 31, 1938, and a temporary church constructed in 1940. In May 1945, the Reverend John F. O'Brien, Pastor, made a formal request for Sisters of Providence to teach at the parish elementary school he wished to establish. The community agreed to assume this ministry, and assigned seven sisters for the 1945-1946 school year; one lay teacher was also hired. Sister Ellen Elizabeth Kelly was the first principal.

Because of material shortages and restrictions caused by World War II, construction of the school building was delayed. However, school opened as scheduled September 17, 1945, with classes held in the church and in large tents erected on the grounds. By the end of the first week, 351 students were enrolled. The school building was finished in November, but not before a week of heavy rain and cold temperatures caused some classes to be cancelled.

At first, the sisters teaching at St. Finbar School lived in the convent of Saint Joseph Hospital, Burbank, about seven blocks from the school, and were under the authority of the hospital superior. By 1952, the enrollment of the school had grown to 670 students, with nine sisters and four lay teachers. Having just completed construction of a new, permanent church, the parish decided to build a convent across the street from the school, at 2121 West Olive Street. The convent opened in July 1953, and Sister Thomas Aquinas was named the first superior of the autonomous house. The school continued to grow, and ten additional classrooms were dedicated in September 1956.

The Sisters of Providence staffed St. Finbar School for almost forty years. Beginning in the 1960s, the number of sisters assigned to the school was gradually reduced, and they were replaced by lay teachers. The first lay principal, Alice Carothers, was hired in 1969. Enrollment declined in the 1970s, and each grade level was consolidated in one classroom. By 1979, only two sisters remained on staff; additional sisters lived at the convent but ministered elsewhere. In July 1979, the sisters withdrew from the convent, and the last two Sisters of Providence left the staff in 1984.

St. Finbar Elementary School continues to be operated by the parish, and celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1994-1995.

ARRANGEMENT

The records of St. Finbar School are arranged in eight series, housed in 2.5 document boxes. The series are: history, administration, personnel, local community, financial, reports, publications, 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]. St. Finbar School, Burbank, California. Record Group 181. Providence Archives, Seattle, Washington.

Acquisition Information: Records were transferred to Providence Archives, Seattle from the school and local community.

Related Record Groups and Other Collections: From 1945 to 1953, the sisters lived at Saint Joseph Hospital, Burbank, California; therefore, some of the sisters' activities, as well as the school finances, statistics, and local council administration records are found in the chronicles and records of the hospital.

After 1973, the activities of the sisters and a summary of school events are included in the Chronicles of the Southern California/Burbank Region. These chronicles are particularly rich in details of the transition from convent life to small-group residences and the sisters' growing involvement in social justice issues and individual ministries.

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 report of enrollment statistics, student involvement in ancillary groups (e.g., Sodality, safety patrol), and special programs (music, vocational preparation, etc.).

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.

Photographs, slides, and films (1946-1949) are stored and inventoried separately.

Processing Information: Records arranged and described by Terri Mitchell, Assistant Archivist; completed on December 15, 1998.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

History

The chronicles are well-written and complete, giving an excellent summary of the foundation of the school and the early years, and continuing through the establishment of regional chronicles in 1973. The document "Account of the Opening of St. Finbar School" is a typed excerpt from the 1945-1946 chronicles. (See also Subject Series for historical information contained in anniversary booklets.)

Box	Folder	Title
1	-	Chronicles, 1945-1974
2	1	Account of Opening (from Chronicles), 1945
2	2	Newsclippings, 1944-1945

Administration

This series features an unusually complete set of foundation request and approval documents, and the initial agreement between the parish and the religious community. The other correspondence in the series was received in the archives in three folders with over-lapping date spans (1945-1949; 1950-1970; and Provincial Administration, 1945-1962), and this order has been retained. Each folder contains a mix of personal and school-related correspondence, with the Provincial Administration folder also containing the "circular letters" of the provincial superior (duplicated copies sent to each institution in the province).

Key correspondents are Sister Ellen Elizabeth Kelly, Principal; the Reverend John O'Brien, Pastor; Sister Judith, Directress of Studies, Sacred Heart Province; Mother Marcién, Provincial Superior; and subsequent local and provincial superiors.

Box	Folder	Title
2	3	Correspondence, Foundation Request/Approval, 1945
2	4	Correspondence, General, 1945-1949
2	5	Correspondence, General, 1950-1970
2	6	Correspondence, Provincial Administration, 1945-1962
2	7	Agreement with Parish, 1945

Personnel

This series includes a listing of principals and sisters assigned to the school, but very little on the lay faculty or students. The Student Record Forms folder contains samples of the forms in use at the opening of the school.

Box	Folder	Title
3	1	Faculty, Principal/Sisters
3	2	Faculty, General
3	3	Students, Activities
3	4	Sample Record Forms, 1945

Local Community

This series documents the governance and administration of the convent (local community), beginning in 1953 when St. Finbar Convent was established as autonomous from Saint Joseph Hospital, Burbank. Records are incomplete, but include a listing of house superiors, minutes of the annual visitation of the provincial superior (proces verbal) and local chapter meetings, the quinquennial (five-year) report to the religious community, and the sisters' daily schedule (horarium).

Box	Folder	Title
3	5	Superiors, 1953-1972
3	6	Proces Verbal, 1954-1968

3	7	Quinquennial Report, 1956-1966
3	8	Local Chapter, 1958, 1964
3	9	Horarium

Financial

The only records in this series are an incomplete notebook of local council minutes (1953-1959) and the local council Acts of Council regarding loans and purchases (1954-1964).

Box	Folder	Title
3	10	Local Council, Minutes, 1953-1959
3	11	Local Council, Acts of Council, 1954-1964

Reports

Found here are a few brief school reports and evaluations (1953-1974), including some faculty evaluations, and an extensive Western Catholic Education Association Self-Evaluation Program report, 1974.

When the convent opened in 1953, the sisters began filing the annual Personnel and Works Reports (statistics) and Semi-Annual and Annual Financial Reports required by the religious community. These are bound together in one volume for the period 1953-1974. (Prior statistics were included in the Personnel and Works Reports and Financial Reports of Saint Joseph Hospital, Burbank.)

Box	Folder	Title
3	12	Personnel and Works/Semi-Annual and Annual Financial Report, 1953-1974
3	13	WCEA Self-Evaluation Program, 1974
3	14	Miscellaneous Evaluation/Reports, c.1950-1970

Publications

This series includes only one item, a school recruitment brochure, c. 1978.

Box	Folder	Title
3	15	Brochure, ca. 1978

Subject Series

Of greatest interest in this series are historical summaries included in the anniversary booklets prepared for the twenty-fifth and fiftieth anniversaries of St. Finbar Parish, and the fiftieth anniversary of the school.

Box	Folder	Title
3	16	Anniversary - Fiftieth, 1994-1995
3	17	Artifacts
3	18	St. Finbar Parish
3	19	Stationery