

# Our Lady of Lourdes and St. James School (Vancouver, 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; Our Lady of Lourdes and St. James School students and staff

**Record Group Name:** Our Lady of Lourdes and St. James School, Vancouver, Washington

**Record Group Number:** 205

**Dates:** 1954-1989

**Scope and Content:** This collection comprises primarily chronicles and administrative correspondence, with a small amount of supporting materials. Materials in the collection date from 1954 to 1989, with the bulk from 1956 to 1976. The records are scanty and incomplete, with many traditional records series missing from the collection.

**Extent:** Approximately 0.5 linear feet (1 document box)

## HISTORICAL NOTE

Abstract: The 100th anniversary of the arrival of the Sisters of Providence in Vancouver, in 1956, was marked by the opening of the new St. James Parish School. The sisters were already familiar with the students, many of whom had previously been enrolled in the elementary school at Providence Academy. When Our Lady of Lourdes Parish opened in 1958, the school's name was changed to reflect sponsorship by both parishes. Although the convent closed in 1976, sisters continued to serve at the school until 1990.

Almost immediately after their arrival in Vancouver in 1856, the Sisters of Providence opened an orphanage, boarding school, and day school. For one hundred years, the children of Vancouver's only Catholic parish, St. James, were educated by the sisters at Providence Academy. By 1956, the buildings housing the Academy's elementary school were overcrowded and antiquated. Realizing that the parish should take greater responsibility for the education of its youth, the Reverend Robert Dillon, Pastor of St. James, decided to open a parochial school. Since the students would be transferring from the Academy, the sisters agreed to staff the new school and to donate much of the necessary equipment and supplies for the facility. In turn, closure of the elementary school at the Academy provided room and funds for improvement of the Academy's high school for girls.

Although the official foundation date is September 6, 1955, St. James School opened April 3, 1956, with 420 students enrolled in grades one through eight. Eight Sisters of Providence and four lay teachers comprised the faculty during this first year.

On November 14, 1958, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish was established in the northern portion of St. James Parish. Since the school was within the boundaries of the new parish, it was renamed Our Lady of Lourdes and St. James School, with joint support from the two parishes. The school chapel served as the first Our Lady of Lourdes Parish church until the permanent church was built. In August 1965, by mutual agreement, the name of the school was shortened to Our Lady of Lourdes School, although it continued to serve children from both parishes. The formal administrative relationship was with the pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, but the sisters who taught at the school were involved in the lives of both parishes. For example, in order to strengthen students' ties to their respective parishes, the sisters conducted two separate First Communion classes and religious education programs.

For the first ten years, the sisters lived at Providence Academy and commuted to the school in a station wagon provided by the parish. With the closing of the Academy in June 1966, the sisters moved to the fifth floor of the Providence Hospital Nurse's Home, in Portland, Oregon. The commute from Portland was difficult, and at the request of the sisters, the Reverend Cornelius Harrington,

Pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, leased a house at 4124 Northwest Fruit Valley Road. The parish then constructed a large, modern convent, located adjacent to the school at 4809 Franklin. The sisters gratefully moved into the convent on May 18, 1968.

In the summer of 1970, the convent served as an experimental House of Prayer for women religious. A core community was formed with five Sisters of Providence and an Ursuline sister; they were joined by other sisters for shorter periods of study and retreat during the summer. The focus of the community life was reading, discussion, and presentations--especially on ecumenical and social issues--prayer, apostolic works, and community life.

The number of sisters assigned to the school gradually declined until the summer of 1976, when one only one sister remained on staff. At that time, Sister Mary Leona Miller moved to an apartment, vacating the convent for other uses by the parish. She continued to teach and serve as assistant vice principal until 1990, when she retired from full-time ministry.

## ARRANGEMENT

The record group is divided into seven series: *history, administration, personnel, local community, 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]. Our Lady of Lourdes and St. James School, Vancouver, Washington. Record Group 205. Providence Archives, Seattle, Washington.

**Acquisition Information:** Records were transferred to Providence Archives, Seattle from Our Lady of Lourdes and St. James School's staff.

**Related Record Groups and Other Collections:** From 1956 to 1966, the sisters teaching at Our Lady of Lourdes and St. James School lived at Providence Academy, Vancouver; therefore, the annual Personnel and Works Report (faculty and student statistics) for this period are found within the Providence Academy collection. Mention of the foundation of the school can be found in the Academy's chronicles and administrative correspondence.

The activities of the sisters from 1973 to 1976 are documented in the Chronicles of the Vancouver and Olympia Region, which also mention some school events.

The records of the 1970 summer House of Prayer are located in the Annual Retreat record series of the Providence Spirituality collection. 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.)

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.

A very small number of photographs are stored and inventoried separately.

**Processing Information:** Records arranged and described by Terri Mitchell, Assistant Archivist; completed on June 20, 2000.

## BOX AND FOLDER LIST

### History

This series contains two bound sets of chronicles, 1956-1974. The chronicles are complete and interesting in the early years. Later years are cursory and focused on the activities of the sisters rather than the school. (See administrative correspondence and subject series files for supplemental historical material.)

Box	Folder	Title
1	1-2	Chronicles, 1956-1974 (2 sets)

### Administration

This series includes administrative correspondence, received in two folders and arranged in chronological order. The first folder, 1954-1976, is a mixture of letters between the sisters and the various pastors of St. James and Our Lady of Lourdes Parishes, and between the sisters at the school and the provincial superior. Topics include both school affairs and the business of the sisters' local community. Of greatest interest are the early foundation letters, which detail financial arrangements and the transfer of equipment and supplies from Providence Academy to the new parish school.

The second folder is correspondence between the pastors or principals and Sister Laretta Frawley, Executive Secretary/Director of the Education Division, Sacred Heart Province, 1971-1977.

Box	Folder	Title
1	3	Correspondence, General, 1954-1977
1	4	Correspondence, Education Division, 1971-1977

### Personnel

This series includes an incomplete list of sisters and lay personnel who served at the school and the incomplete records of the sisters' local community. There are no other faculty or student records in the collection.

Box	Folder	Title
1	5	Faculty, List of Sisters and Lay Personnel
1	6	Faculty, Newsclippings

### Local Community

This series documents the governance and administration of the convent (local community). The only records are the sisters' daily schedule (horarium) and an inventory of books in the convent library.

Box	Folder	Title
1	7	Horarium, 1966
1	8	Library Accession Register

### Reports

Although limited in scope to the late 1960s and early 1970s, the reports in this series provide some information on the school's curriculum, texts, facility, and student/family profiles.

Box	Folder	Title
1	9	Criteria for Evaluation of Catholic Elementary Schools, 1969, 1970
1	10	Miscellaneous Evaluation/Reports, c. 1964-1974

### Publications

This series contains only an undated recruitment brochure for Our Lady of Lourdes and St. James

School, which discusses the goals and philosophy of Catholic education and the school in particular.

Box	Folder	Title
1	11	Brochure

### **Subject Series**

The folders in this series are arranged in alphabetical order, focusing on historical events in the life of the school, including the building campaign, dedication, and 25th anniversary.

Box	Folder	Title
1	12	Anniversary, 25th, 1981
1	13	Building Campaign, 1955
1	14-15	Dedication, May 8, 1956
1	16	Graduation, 1960
1	17	Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Directory, ca. 1980
1	18	Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Directory, 1984
1	19	Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Directory, 1989
1	20	Schools Fair, 1989