

From the Archivist:
Many changes are in store for Providence Archives this year and one of them is our newsletter. This issue introduces a new design, expanded articles, and changed publication schedule to three times per year. Now in its twelfth year, the newsletter has provided a way to inform people of archival activities and resources, reach out to patrons, and educate with brief historical sketches. So, improving its content and design is important. We hope you like it. Let us know what you think about these changes or topics you would like to see addressed.

—Loretta Greene

Inside

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Anniversaries

Chapel Windows Find New Home Abroad

This is part of a series on the disposition of stained-glass windows belonging to the Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province.

The chapel in many Providence hospitals has played a central role in the identity and life of the institution, physically and spiritually. From tiny cabins to multistory complexes, space was always reserved for the chapel. One of its traditional features that elicits visual, emotional and inspirational responses is the stained-glass window. The more elaborate stained-glass windows not only filter light to create an ambience of worship but are works of devotional art themselves. Examples of this artistry are windows from the former Providence Hospital in Oakland, California.

One set of windows from the Oakland chapel, made in 1963 by John Hogan of Palo Alto, was installed in its vestibule. The set consisted of seven windows representing the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a principal devotion of the Sisters of Providence (see sidebar next page). The devotion was inherited from their foundress, Blessed Emilie Gamelin, who, when her husband and three small sons died in the course of four years, found consolation in contemplating Mary's sorrows. Our Mother of Sorrows became, for Blessed Emilie, a model of compassion for others; likewise for the sisters, as they emulate their foundress in caring for people in need. Because this devotion is an expression of the sisters' spiritual identity, preserving valuable works of art depicting it becomes an important task. The task takes on more urgency when institutions housing them close or transfer ownership.

When Providence Oakland merged with Merritt Peralta Hospital in 1992, the stained glass windows were reserved as excluded assets, meaning the Sisters of Providence reserved ownership if they were removed in the future. In 2003 the hospital (now Alta Bates Summit Medical Center) decided to remove them permanently during a renovation of the former chapel space. It became necessary for the Mother Joseph Province Leadership Team to decide the disposition of the Seven Sorrows (continued on p. 2)



Forming a mosaic pattern, glass pieces on the first of the Seven Sorrows windows filter light through muted shades of blue, purple and gray—colors of lamentation. Painted in large decorative type are relevant New Testament verses referring to Mary's suffering.

Stained-Glass Windows

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rows. The answer came at a propitious time. For the year 2003 was a celebratory time too—the sesquicentennial of the arrival of the Sisters of Providence in Chile. Thus the Leadership Team decided to present the Seven Sorrows, after full glasswork restoration, to the sisters of Bernard Morin Province in honor of their 150th anniversary.

With Providence Archives coordinating the project, the job of restoring and refabricating the windows was in the expert hands of Oakland's Lenehan Architectural Glass. Each of the seven

windows, measuring 4 ½ by 3 feet, has at its focal point a rendering of the heart of the Blessed Virgin pierced by swords, the number of swords depending on which sorrow is represented. Painstaking cleaning has intensified the hues of the colored glass pieces, most of which, according to Lenehan studios, were made by the prestigious Blenko Glass Company, an antique glasshouse in West Virginia.

On March 12, 2004, the 300-lb. crate containing the windows arrived in Santiago, Chile. Sr. Marta Alvear, Bernard Morin Provincial Superior, plans to install the windows as they undertake construc-

The Seven Sorrows of Mary

And you yourself shall be pierced with a sword—so that the thoughts of many hearts may be laid bare.—Luke 2:35

- Sorrow at the prophecy of Simeon
- Sorrow at the flight into Egypt
- Sorrow at losing the Holy Child in Jerusalem
- Sorrow at meeting Jesus on his way to Calvary
- Sorrow standing at the foot of the Cross
- Sorrow at Jesus being taken from the Cross
- Sorrow at the burial of Christ

tion of chapels in their province. When that happens, the Seven Sorrows windows will again become palettes of light in space meant for them, a place of spiritual refuge.



Brick by Brick (so to speak...)

Renovation in the Archives continues.

Thank you for bearing with us as we provide you with services and resources under temporary, limited conditions. Watch for our reopening in the summer!

Did You Know

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more time, and she prayed about it. She offered a huge sacrifice to God to add weight to her prayers: she made a promise not to read any of her mail from her family in Montreal. Since mail came about once a year from Fort Benton on the upper Missouri River, it was a great sacrifice.

“That year the Sisters learned the Salish language. Moreover, the young Sisters managed to rescue Mother’s unopened mail from the waste basket, read it, and drop the news for her to hear from time to time...”

Eventually the mission and its schools for girls and boys thrived. More sisters arrived to teach and to

nurse the ill. Enrollees among the Flatheads, Kootenais, Pend d’Oreilles, Coeur d’Alenes, among others, increased. Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus spent the rest of her life at Holy Family School—an extraordinary 52 years. Even when she was no longer the school’s superior, Indians constantly asked for her, thinking that everything went through her. Sr. Mary Edward, a master in raising funds among the miners, was transferred to Missoula to open Sacred Heart Academy, nine years after arriving at St. Ignatius. Only 38 years old when she died, Sr. Paul Miki taught at Holy Family for 16 years. Sr. Remi worked 20 years at the school before returning to

Montreal and succumbing to a long illness.

If the early sisters had not persevered in their works in St. Ignatius, the history of the Sisters of Providence in western Montana, northern Idaho, and eastern Washington might have taken a different course altogether. The religious houses and ministries from these areas later came under St. Ignatius Province, one of the three entities established in 1891 to administer Sisters of Providence in the western United States. The province would claim Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus and her fellow sisters as its foundresses—resolute Lady Blackrobes who were almost expelled for their lack of knowledge of the Salish tongue.

Did You Know...Sister foundresses were almost expelled from an Indian school?

Securing teachers for Catholic missions in the frontier West of the mid-19th century preoccupied many missionary priests such as Jesuit Father Peter John DeSmet. While breathtakingly beautiful and immense, the regions of what are now the Idaho-Montana border were, for non-natives, formidably cold, isolated, and untamed. Named Blackrobe by the Indians, Fr. DeSmet, the first Catholic clergyman to evangelize

in the Western Plains and the Rocky Mountains, had encountered Sisters of Providence in 1858 at Fort Vancouver in Washington Territory. He knew he had found the right religious community to assume the role of educator to his

beloved Indian tribes. Here was a newly arrived group eager to work with the natives and willing to traverse rugged terrain to fulfill their calling in remote areas.

On September 17, 1864 a caravan of three Jesuit priests, two baggage carriers, "a man for emergencies," and four Sisters of Providence set out on horseback from Walla Walla for St. Ignatius Mission in the Flathead Reservation of Montana. Word of their journey spread quickly by moccasin telegraph. By the time they reached the Cataldo mission in Idaho on canoe, Coeur d'Alene Indians had lined up on the riverbanks to welcome the Lady Blackrobes: Mary of the Infant Jesus, 37 years old, Mary Edward, 32, Paul Miki, 21, and Remi, 18. After four weeks of arduous travel, the group descended the Bitterroot Mountains and arrived at the mission on October

17. St. Ignatius became the sisters' new home and they named their school for girls after the Holy Family.

Life was hard for both Indians and settlers of the area. Tribes were undergoing tremendous social, cultural, political and economic upheavals as a result of their contact with settlers who themselves were adapting to a new, uncertain way of life in their search for land, natural resources, commerce and autonomy. The first year found the sisters at Holy Family School at times in desperation and deprivation. Supplies had to come from St. Louis, Missouri, and arrived a year from the request. The mission relied on the charity of settlers, military personnel at outpost forts, miners and other missionaries near and far. At times it was so bad at the school that parents complained and withdrew their daughters.

The troubles came to a head in 1866 when an ultimatum was given by an Indian chief to the sisters. One of the sisters later narrated the story:

"When the first Sisters had been at St. Ignatius for two years, they still could not speak the Salish language very successfully. The old Chief came to the school to throw them out. He said, 'If you can't learn the Indian language, go back to Montreal. You are no good to us here.'

"Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus was in great distress, but she asked for

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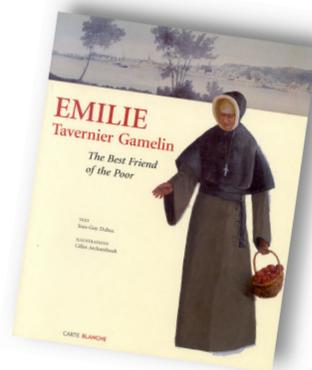
Mother Mary of the Infant Jesus in St. Ignatius, Montana, c. 1890s

Page Turners

📖 *Emilie Tavernier Gamelin: The Best Friend of the Poor* by Jean-Guy Dubuc, Carte Blanche Editions, 2002. The fascinating life of the foundress of the Sisters of Providence is told in this book for young readers, which includes activity pages about Montreal in the 1800s. Readers will learn about the humility and charity of Mother Gamelin who was also a woman of action.

📖 "Pioneer Sisters in a Catholic Melting Pot: Juggling Identity in the Pacific Northwest," *American Catholic Studies* (Spring 2003), by Anne M. Butler. Prof. Butler, who researched in the Archives, examines the 19th century experiences of two French-Canadian congregations in the Pacific Northwest, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary and the Sisters of Providence. Their commonalities helped them sustain each other while Americanization was exacting cultural transformations on both communities. In turn, they contributed to the shaping of the American church.

To borrow these titles, please contact the Religious Community Library at 206-464-3987.



2004: A Year of Providence Anniversaries

Congratulations to the following facilities celebrating anniversaries as part of Providence Services and Providence Health System

APRIL 16
MOTHER JOSEPH DAY



I stepped on the soil of Oregon to labor with all my strength to accomplish the designs of God for the works of Providence.

*Mother Joseph
of the Sacred Heart*

80 years

Providence Mount Saint Vincent,
Seattle, Washington

25 years

Providence Newberg Hospital,
Newberg, Oregon
Providence Hospitality House,
Seattle, Washington

20 years

Providence Regina House,
Seattle, Washington

5 years

Providence Blanchet House, Centralia, Washington
Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital, Hood River, Oregon
Providence Rossi House, Olympia, Washington
Little Company of Mary Service Area, Torrance, California
San Pedro Hospital, San Pedro, California



Providence Mount St. Vincent, Seattle, just after completion, 1924

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