

# Past *Forward*

## PROVIDENCE ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province • Providence Health & Services

### Providence Academy Developments

Loretta Z. Greene

**O**n May 1, Providence Academy, Vancouver, Wash., entered the third stage of its life when the Fort Vancouver Historic Trust announced a capital campaign to purchase the Academy from the Hidden brothers. A gathering of more than 60 donors, friends, alumni, media and government leaders enthusiastically greeted this news in the Academy's chapel.



Monte Hidden, Edward Lynch, Elson Strahan, and Sister Susanne Hartung, SP, respond to questions in the Academy chapel

served as the sisters' mother house and provincial administration in the West, as well as a day school, boarding school and orphanage. After it closed in 1966, the building entered the second stage of its life when it was purchased in 1969 by Robert Hidden, whose grandfather supplied bricks for its construction. The Hiddenes have served as its stewards for more than 40 years.

The Academy was designed

and built by Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart in 1873. It

As the third owner of the  
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### What's New in the Archives?

#### *New Addition to the Archives Family*

Providence Archives welcomes its newest member: Franklin Alexander Dominick was born on February 17, 2012 to Associate Archivist Emily Hughes Dominick and her husband, Yancy. At birth, Frank-



lin weighed in at 6 pounds, 6 ounces and measured 19 inches

in length. ☞

#### *The Providence Sister and Caritas now online*

Previous issues of *Past Forward* have carried news about our online digital collections database, and many of you have enjoyed browsing through the photographs, images of artifacts, and other material available there. While the bulk of material in the database is illustrative, we have begun adding more textual resources to the digital collections. We are very pleased to announce that two important publications from the former Sacred Heart Province, the *Providence Sister* and early issues of *Caritas* are now available online!

Both publications were



launched in 1963 as a result of the formation of a Central Development Office for the province, headed by John P. Greeley and J. William Tobin. Both publications were driven by the goal of providing an effective forum for public relations and program development within the province.

The *Providence Sister* ran until 1971, but *Caritas* is still published for the benefit of Mother Joseph Province. As of this writing, all issues of the *Providence Sister* (1963-1971)  
*continued on back page*



## SP Spotlight: Sister Cecilia Mary Kucera

*Emily Hughes Dominick*  
*Associate Archivist*

Providence Academy has always played a central role in the lives and times of the Sisters of Providence in the Northwest. When they first came to the west, it was the original foundation, literally and figuratively, for this small band of sisters setting down roots in a new land. Before there was the building that we know today, there was the land and then a collection of little buildings out of which the sisters carried out their varied ministries of teaching, caring for the ill, as well as training new sisters just entering the community. Even when the Academy closed its doors as a Providence school in 1966, the building stood tall, a reminder of its former use. And today, it remains the last surviving building that Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart designed and built.

With so much history, and so



*Name in Religion:*  
**Cecilia Mary**  
*Given Name:*  
**Agnes Ann**  
*Number in Religion:*  
**3150**  
*Date of Birth:*  
**1905**  
*Entrance to Novitiate:*  
**1924**  
*First Profession:*  
**1925**  
*Date of Death:*  
**1978**

many sisters passing through its halls, it is impossible to choose a representative sister for this column. For this spotlight, I chose Sister Cecilia Mary since she played key roles in two important moments in the history of the Academy: the centennial celebration of the Sisters in the Northwest in 1956, and the subsequent closure of the school in 1966.

Sister Cecilia Mary was appointed director of the centennial activities in celebration of the arrival of the Sisters of Providence in the west. The Academy chronicles described her appointment as “a fortunate choice,” and went on to write: “With no other office to demand her attention, Sister Cecilia Mary gave herself completely to the project.

Public Relations and social rapport being her main objective, Sister sought to bring to the notice of the public what the presence of the Sisters of Charity of Providence had meant to the city of Vancouver; to show the effects of their century of labors; to present some tangible evidence of their influence, not only spiritu-

ally, but also socially, morally, economically, and artistically” (Chronicles, January 1956). This celebration included, among other events, the performance of an original musical drama written, scored and directed by Sister Cecilia Mary called “Land of Loo-et.” The musical was well received when it was performed on May 8 and 9, 1956. The musical was filmed in color two days later at Lewisville Park in Vancouver by Henry Portin.

Ten years later, she was called upon to take charge of the closure of the Academy as its final superior. On January 23, 1966 Sister Cecilia Mary was given the official notification from Provincial Superior, Mother Mary Loretta, that the Academy would close at the conclusion of the school year. The sisters had a mere seven months to plan and arrange for the closure of the school. The final pages of the chronicles note the dismantling of the chapel, opening of the cornerstone, and disposal of the household equipment and supplies. The last chronicle entry on August 4, 1966 abruptly ends: “As Sister Cecilia Mary departed, the house was locked and the historic property placed under the surveillance of a caretaker.” ☪



### Do you know?

We have documentation that *Land of Loo-et* was filmed by Henry Portin, who owned a motion picture film business in Seattle, but we do not have the resulting recording. If you have any information about where to locate the film, please notify Providence Archives staff.



## Picturing Providence

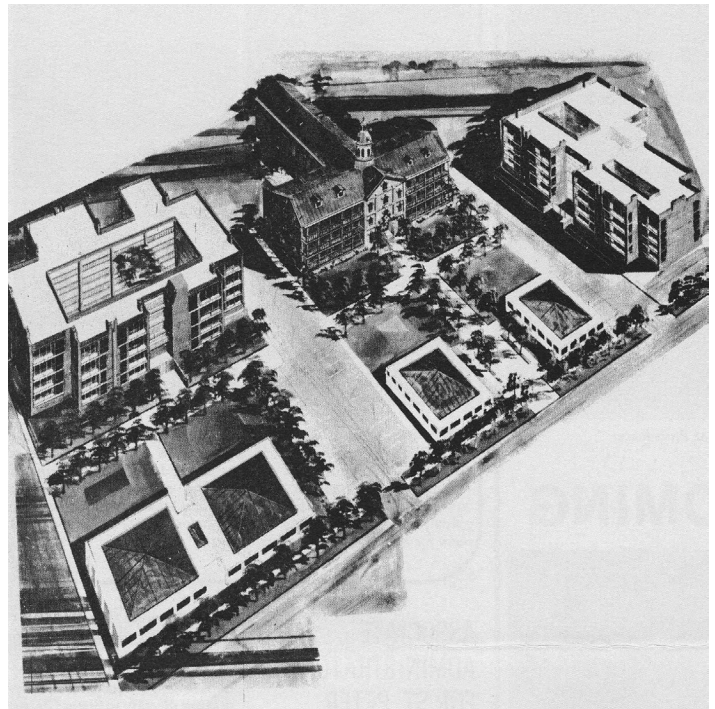
Peter F. Schmid

*A column highlighting archival materials that provide visual documentation of the Sisters of Providence.*

With all of the excitement about the new plans for Providence Academy by the Fort Vancouver National Trust (see story in this issue), it may surprise you to learn that other plans for development of the property had been made as early as 1972.

This architectural plan illustrates a proposal by American Condominium Homes of Portland, Oregon, to develop a mixed retail and residential property around the historic Academy, and was published in the June 1972 issue of *Caritas*. The plan, with an estimated cost of \$14.5 million, envisioned shops and offices in the Academy building, surrounded by commercial space, apartments, and condominiums, with a parking garage behind the Academy building to be added later.

You might notice something curious in the symmetry of the Academy as illustrated here; the story notes that “The old Academy building will be



virtually untouched on the exterior,” but that the “new wing” (the 1889 addition which included the auditorium) would be demolished “to restore the structure to original lines.” Perhaps Mother Joseph would

approve of the change, as she famously was said to have disliked the 1889 addition because it destroyed the building’s symmetry, but I think that we can be glad today that the plan was never implemented. ☞

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Academy, the Fort Vancouver Historic Trust plans to restore and maintain the building and surrounding seven acres and continue to provide space for community gatherings and commercial use. Ownership of the Academy has been a dream of the Trust since its foundation in 1998. “It is the right time to do the right thing,” commented Elson Strahan, CEO and President, Fort Vancouver Historic Trust. The Academy is within walking distance of the sprawling Fort Vancouver National Site, easily accessed via Evergreen Boulevard that crosses Interstate 5.

“There is such excitement in the Vancouver community

over the future of the Academy,” commented Sister Susanne Hartung, SP, Chief Mission Integration Officer for Providence Health & Services, who has led numerous pilgrimages to the Academy for Providence employees as part of the Mission Leadership Formation program. The Academy is considered one of the most historically significant buildings in the region, and the Trust’s vision for it is as an historic complex, bringing new vitality to the downtown core.

There are several advantages to the Trust’s ownership of the Academy, including the ability to leverage funds, mobilize volunteers and apply for preservation and restoration grants. The campaign launched

with a \$2 million lead gift from Edward Lynch, campaign co-chair, toward the goal of raising \$16 million in 12 months. For more information about the Academy Campaign, visit their website: [academycampaign.org](http://academycampaign.org).

In anticipation of increased interest in the history of Providence Academy as a result of the campaign, the archives staff is enhancing the arrangement and description of the Academy’s historical records and photographs collections. Photographs are catalogued in the digital collections database available online at [providencearchives.contentdm.oclc.org](http://providencearchives.contentdm.oclc.org). The collection description will be published online when completed. ☞

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and *Caritas* issues between 1963 and 2001 are available. All of the text in these documents is searchable. ☞

### *New Exhibit Now on Display*

A new exhibit in Providence Archives showcases a selection of mugs from many ministries in Providence Health & Services. These utilitarian and commemorative mugs were created to celebrate new facilities, programs, anniversaries, people and events. They are now on display in the Archives reference room in West Seattle. Also on display: *The Wax Workshop* at the Hawley Conference Center, Valley Office Park in Renton; and “15 cows, one steer and one bull”: *The growth and development of the Farm and Dairy at Mary Immaculate School, DeSmet, Idaho* at Mount

### St. Joseph in Spokane. ☞ *Artifacts Featured at Outdoor Fair*

St. Peter Hospital, Olympia, Wash., presented a glimpse of healthcare in the 1920s when it hosted a medical tent on May 12 at an outdoor fair, *Thurston County through the Decades 1900-1925*. The display included a panel of historical images celebrating the hospital’s 125th anniversary and artifacts on loan from the Archives collection. Among the early-20th century artifacts were a glass syringe, optical measuring card, blood pressure cuff,

electrocardiograph and wicker wheelchair. The wheelchair is a recent donation from Terry Price, formerly of Seattle. The wheelchair, in excellent condition, is originally from Providence Hospital, Seattle, marked ‘5th Floor’, and has Providence equipment labels. Happy Anniversary, St. Peter’s!  
☞



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*Past Forward* is published three times annually by Archives staff. Editing and design by Emily Hughes Dominick.

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