

# Past

# Forward

## PROVIDENCE ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

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



*FROM THE ARCHIVIST*  
by *Loretta Z. Greene, M.A., C.A.*

### Your Story is Our History

Lovingly nestled in the bottom of a drawer, or carefully stored in a box or trunk are personal mementos or records of your years at a Providence school or hospital – correspondence, photographs, scrapbooks, clippings, programs, your uniform, artifacts, keepsakes from special events. Sometimes you wonder what will happen to them. Does anyone cherish your records like you do? How should your materials be preserved so they will not be damaged or lost? Often Providence Archives staff is asked for guidance with these questions. Whether your records are professional or personal they are a part of Providence history and donating them to Providence Archives ensures their preservation. Your story is our history

Although there are many different record types, generally they can be divided into professional work-related and administrative records or personal papers. All of these records are preserved in the Archives, are valuable to our history, and should be transferred to the Archives. Without preserving and remembering the past, we have shallow roots. Our history is stronger when it is larger than one individual and when persons

who have been touched by Providence see themselves as part of its history. One group whose history is stronger than one individual is the Provi-

are unique items not currently part of the historical collections. These materials complement the current collections and enhance the study and

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*The Providence Academy, Vancouver, Washington, class of 1899 portrait is one of the several family mementoes recently donated by Kirch DeMartini of Saratoga, California.*

dence alumni. Innumerable graduates have walked the halls of Providence schools and the passage of time underscores the reality of our aging alumni from nursing programs, academies, and parish schools. Photographs, papers and keepsakes provide important documentation of their educational experiences. In most cases personal mementos

understanding of Providence history.

On July 31, 2004, Providence Academy alumni gathered in Vancouver, WA. Kirch DeMartini, son and grandson of Academy graduates, displayed photographs, commencement programs and other mementos dating to

*(continued on p.4)*

#### Inside

Did You Know

SJR mural

Pics of Providence

## Did You Know...the Sisters of Providence published in 1869 a highly regarded pharmacopeia

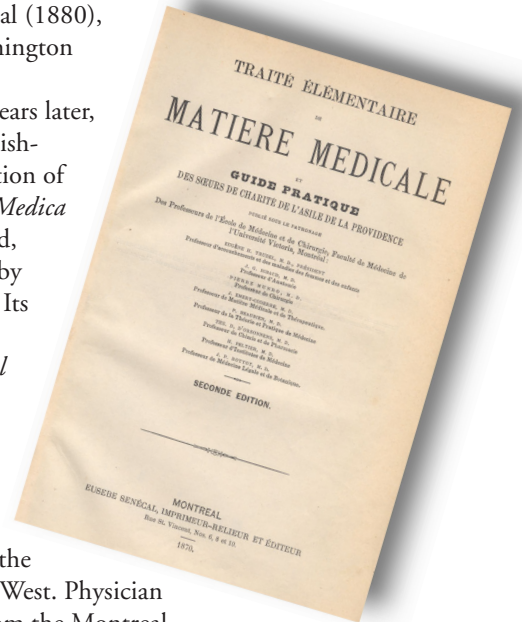
The branch of medicine dealing with the origins, preparation and use of remedial substances, called the *materia medica*, has played a prominent role in the cure of disease in early medical practice. Today we would recognize the *materia medica* in the areas of pharmacology, toxicology, and therapeutics. It was during the mid-19th century, as modern nursing was taking foothold worldwide, when the Sisters of Providence in Montreal published the *Traité Élémentaire de Matière Médicale et Guide Pratique* (Elementary Treatise of Materia Medica and Practical Guide) in 1869, the community's first textbook on the subject. The comprehensive, one-volume work was intended for nurse sisters "so as to give them greater facility to know the facts needed to intelligently second the efforts of the doctors and, in their absence, in urgent cases, to give first aid to the

patients." The pharmacopeia included chapters on surgery, anatomy, symptomatology, diagnosis, and other sciences.

Instrumental in the *Materia Medica's* publication were Sister Peter Claver (Elmire Resther) and Sister Joseph Henry (Marie Lea Anna Renaud). The latter was head of the motherhouse printing office and collaborated on the work for eight years. The book was in great measure the authorship of Sister Peter Claver, a pharmacist and teacher of nurses, who had acquired theoretical and practical knowledge the envy of physicians. The treatise became a passion of hers that almost cost her health, according to the community's necrology. She would be assigned to the missions in the West in 1874 where she embarked on standardization of care and treatment of patients and of the training of their caregivers. Attributed to

her as well was the co-founding of Seattle's Providence Hospital (1877) and Walla Walla's St. Mary Hospital (1880), both in Washington Territory.

Twenty years later, the first English-language edition of the *Materia Medica* was published, again edited by Peter Claver. Its title was *The Little Medical Guide of the Sisters of Charity of Providence* and was dedicated to the sisters in the West. Physician professors from the Montreal School of Medicine at the time lauded the work as indispensable, "much in vogue," and having wide interest.



1870 edition of the *Materia Medica*

## A Feast for the Eye



As part of the renovation of St. Joseph Residence, the sister's retirement and guest facility in Seattle, archival photographs from ministries in Washington and Alaska were reproduced to create this mural in the dining room. Architect Dyke Turner, director of planning and development at Providence Mount St. Vincent, Seattle, designed the wall art measuring 8 by 26 feet. Providence Academy, Vancouver, figures prominently among the photographs. Many sisters currently at SJR were students, teachers or residents of the academy.

## PICTURING PROVIDENCE

by Peter F. Schmid, C.A., Assistant Archivist for Visual Resources

*In this issue we introduce a column highlighting archival photographs and other resources that provide visual documentation of the Sisters of Providence religious community and sponsored institutions. Peter will select notable materials from the collection of over 50,000 photographs and relate or interpret the stories behind them. He can be reached at 206-923-4012 or peter.schmid@providence.org.*

## Sowing Seeds of the Faith

A touching, candid moment captured at Providence St. Vincent de Paul Academy in Walla Walla, Washington, in the 1920s, shows children visiting with Sister Mary Berchmans as she does her sewing. She taught at the academy at various times between 1924 and 1932.

Sister had a special devotion to Our Lady of Fatima, and taught the rosary to a class of first graders by laying out a giant set of bright rosary beads in the center of the classroom. The children were invited to take their respective places near the beads and recite the Hail Marys. After the children learned the prayer, Sister would lend the set to them to take home and pray with their families. Demand ran so high that Sister made oversized rosaries for every grade.

Later in life, while convalescing at Providence Mount St. Vincent in West Seattle in the 1940s, Sr. Mary became concerned about the large number of Catholic children growing up in nearby High Point without religious instruction. Along with Mother Gerard of Providence and other sisters, she began instructing children outdoors in neighborhood groups. As a result a number of those children enrolled in area parochial schools.



### Renovate... and They Shall Come

It's celebration time at St. Joseph Residence in Seattle, also home to Providence Archives. The residence is hosting an open house and blessing of renovated floors and rooms. The Archives will welcome guests into their new areas and present historical records, photos, and artifacts.

**St. Joseph Residence  
Open House and Blessing  
Sept. 26, 2004  
2:00 to 4:00 p.m.**

Come one, come all!  
*See our address on the next page. Call for directions.*

## ***From the Archivist***

*(continued from p. 1)*

1899. Desiring to preserve these materials for future generations, Mr. DeMartini gladly donated his family treasures to the Archives.

Other gifts in recent years have included student scrapbooks, medals and pins, nursing caps, capes and course materials, and photographs documenting nursing programs including training and activities. From newspaper clippings to artifacts, all materials enhance the Providence story.

Perhaps you don't have personal or family items but know someone who does. Then pass this newsletter on to them and let them know about

Providence Archives and our work so they can donate their materials. The Archives is a state-of-the-art repository and research facility where collections are arranged and described, filed in acid-free containers, and stored in a controlled temperature and humidity environment to prolong preservation. Here they are preserved in a single, secure location and will be readily accessible to the donor, their family and descendants.

*Upcoming issue: Retention and transfer of professional work-related records in the facilities*

# **WANTED**

## **Historical Documents & Photographs**

Do you have documents or photographs that reflect your work or student life with the Sisters of Providence at one of their schools or hospitals?

If you would like them appraised by our archivists for their historical and research value, contact Providence Archives.

### **Reward**

The chance to live forever...  
in Providence history.

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*Past Forward* is published in  
the spring, summer and fall.  
Editing and design:  
J. Norman Dizon

Postage