

PROVIDENCE ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

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

Her crowning glory: Our Lady's homecoming

Peter Schmid

The unsettled spring weather here in Seattle gave the sisters and staff at St. Joseph Residence a welcome break on May 9, when old was made new again: a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes was rededicated under brilliant sunshine.

The statue, carved from Carrera marble, was originally placed in the novitiate garden of Mount St. Vincent in Seattle, in 1929. "The Mount," currently Providence Mount St. Vincent, housed at that time both a "home for the aged" on the east side of the building, and the Sisters of Providence novitiate and provincial headquarters on the west side. The grounds were covered in mature trees, orchards and gardens, including a novitiate garden with a Lourdes grotto.

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Novice Sisters of Providence make devotions at the original Lourdes grotto at Mount St. Vincent, 1940s. Note the St. Bernadette Soubirous statue at center, no longer extant. The Lourdes statue at upper right was rededicated on May 9.

It's only a matter of time . . .

Pam Hedquist

Rewind: After St. Ignatius and Sacred Heart Provinces merged to form Mother Joseph Province in 2000, the provincial leadership team decided to move provincial administration offices at Mount St. Joseph (MSJ) from shared space on the third floor of the south side of the building with (then) Providence Services, to private offices on the second floor of the north side of the building. Relocating the fifth-floor religious community library to be near provincial administration was also a part of this decision. Major renovations prior to the 2001 move included new carpet, HVAC, reception area, library shelving, and break-room with a kitchenette.

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Movin' on up!

Jessica Long

As if the move of provincial administration offices at Mount St. Joseph weren't enough, Phase 2 – relocation of the archives artifacts collections – created another whirlwind of activity in February 2022. Instead of office desks and supplies, this time the hallways were filled by a procession of liturgical objects, boxes of antique medical equipment, organs and furniture, framed artwork, and trunks.

The Saint Ignatius Province (SIP) archives has been located at Mount St. Joseph since its foundation in 1971, and soon afterward found a home in what was the large guest dining room with smaller adjacent rooms on the lower level of the building's west side. This section of the building is itself historic, being part of the original Rockwood Clinic. Over the following decades additional archival storage rooms were used as the collection grew and later downsized, but the main repository on the first level persisted through it all. The former dining room was devoted to storage of the SIP historical collections and file cabinets, shelving for books, counters to organize newspaper clippings, and a small museum for displaying artifacts, in addition to work desks for archive staff. After the SIP and Sacred Heart Province (SHP) archives combined, the

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Crowning glory

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Doing the honors: Sr. Mary Fox, SP places the crown while Sr. Christine Aviso, Carm. OL looks on

The ministries of the Sisters of Providence hosted many different Marian statue iterations, but not all were Lourdes grottos, which usually included a statue of St. Bernadette Soubirous (to whom Our Lady appeared at the mouth of a cave repeatedly beginning in 1858) kneeling at the base of the grotto in adoration. According to Chronicles, the Bernadette statue was added to the Mount grotto in 1934. Unfortunately, the St. Bernadette statue is no longer extant.

The Lourdes statue had been put into storage at some point before or during construction of Saint Joseph Residence (SJR) in 1965-1966. SJR is located just west of the Mount on the same campus. For nearly 30 years, the statue sat unattended, when in 1990 Sister Rita Bergamini, then archivist, received a call saying that there were statues, including a Lourdes, stored in a back room at the Mount, and would she want them for the archives? Sr. Rita accepted the statues, but had no place for them so back they went into storage at a different location – for another 30 years.

In 2020, archives began evaluating items in long-term storage and confirmed that the Lourdes statue was from the Mount garden. We looked at the SJR garden outside the dining room, which is backed by a beautiful hillside with mature rhododendrons and azaleas, and thought it

would be the perfect place for Our Lady to again grace the campus. The sisters agreed and we began planning for our celebration.

First, the heavy marble statue needed a base. Happily, a member of the engineering staff at the Mount had experience working with concrete and was excited to take on the project. He created a beautifully shaped base and added a few rocks from the hillside to make it blend even more with the surroundings. The statue was placed in a slight recess so that she will not tip over.

Though weather forecasts were gloomy the morning of May 9, Providence smiled upon our celebration as sisters and staff gathered under beautiful blue skies for a trifecta celebration of statue rededication, May crowning, and Mother's Day. Archivist Loretta Greene read a brief history of the statue to the crowd gathered on the SJR patio. Sister Jean Schultz blessed the statue with holy water and Sister Mary Fox crowned Our Lady with flowers. The rededication and crowning were followed by traditional prayers, a Marian hymn and Mother's Day tea. The Lourdes statue looks perfect in her new home, so near to her first.



The rededicated and crowned Lourdes statue in her new home

Matter of time

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Fast forward: Twenty years later provincial administration and the library are on the move again – returning to the south side of the building! However, this time the archives artifact collection came along (see related article in this issue). Since the move in 2001, the sisters on the fourth-floor infirmary have relocated to St. Joseph Resi-



Bouten crew Melvin (left) and Ralph kept the project right on schedule

dence in Seattle leaving few provincial administration staff members at MSJ. The building sold to Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center in 2014 and continued as an office space for Providence caregivers. The fourth floor remained vacant until November 2021, when Mount St. Joseph became a second location for Allied Residential Services, a program that provides a home for people in transition.

At the same time, most Providence caregivers in the building worked remotely, which left vacant offices, especially on the third floor. This provided an opportunity for Provincial leadership to negotiate a relocation deal with Providence Health, and in a moment of déjà vu the three long-time staff members, Debbie Roth, Kelly Hilton and Pam Hedquist, embraced moving back to their old familiar territory on the third floor. Pam took the lead on organizing the move of provincial administration offices and the library. She coordinated with the affected Providence

caregivers to clean out their vacant offices - a slow and challenging process.

Bouten Construction was hired to renovate our newly-acquired spaces. (The Sisters of Providence have had a long-standing working relationship with Bouten for over 82 years, including many projects on MSJ.)

The offices, library, and hallway got a fresh coat of paint. Bouten also added new handrails in the hallway, updated our private west entrance, relocated an interior door near the west entrance, and added secure keypads to the exterior door and hallway access.

Provincial staff spent hours preparing for the move, especially Kelly, Debbie and Pam who sorted through 20 years of files and filled up three 64-gallon shredding bins! Once the sorting for donations, shredding, and packing of seven offices, breakroom, office supplies and storage area were finished, we were ready to move up.

Moving Day! On October 12, only the staff offices moved, as the library was not yet ready. It was fun setting up our offices, and discovering the squirrels in the trees outside our large windows which still provide wonderful entertainment! Debbie and Jessica Long did a fabulous job of unpacking and reshelving office supplies and setting up the breakroom. The move became a family affair when staff husbands pitched in to help: Debbie's husband, Barry helped to hang framed items from the archive collection as well as our office décor; Pam's husband Rick helped anchor

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Barry Roth hangs items from the archives collection

Movin'

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historical paper and photograph collections from SIP were moved to the Seattle repository, and SHP artifacts in Seattle were moved to Spokane in 2003. This influx of large and small objects filled the entire Spokane repository from top to bottom and remained that way, even after the Mount was sold to Providence Health Care in 2014 and the west side of the building was vacated.



The storage area in the former Rockwood Clinic was crammed with artifacts, making access extremely difficult

The same issues behind the Fall 2021 provincial administration office move (see related article), as well as the leadership team's concerns about Jessica working alone in an isolated area, prompted the decision to relocate the entire artifact collection, along with the provincial administration offices, within the Mount. With about 1,400 square feet of useable floor space in the original archives, it was impossible to find another single room large enough to hold the entire collection. Instead, ten office rooms, comprising about 2,200 square feet in total, were identified on the third floor of the southeast side. The additional space provides safer, less crowded storage for the artifacts, room for the collections to grow, and the ability for Jessica to access all the objects in her care. The real silver lining, however, is that the rooms are adjacent to the provincial offices so that all the Spokane staff are together for the first time.

In preparation for this enormous project, Jessica was kept busy in the months preceding the move. The new rooms were cleaned, black-out curtains hung to block sunlight and summer heat, and new shelving units installed. Loretta Greene made several trips to Spokane to help evaluate parts of the collection, measure objects, and create detailed floorplans for each new room to identify

where objects would be moved. One challenge was the weight of heavier objects, such as the organs and the sacristy cabinet. Bouten Construction advised caution with weight distribution, so this complicated the logistics of how to efficiently divide up the 5,000 objects in the collection among the ten rooms.

Due to the delicate and valuable nature of the artifacts, size of the job, and limited access to the lower level via a spiral staircase and a vintage elevator, it was decided to hire professional movers. Loretta and Peter added their expertise to the move as well. Alex Fergus, assistant reference archivist at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, also volunteered to help on the first day. Jessica and Pam knew Alex from Spokane Area Archivists, a group of local professionals who meet every few weeks. In addition to his interest in church history, this project was a good learning opportunity for him. Alex's enthusiasm and extra pair of hands were very much appreciated!

On the morning of the big day, Loretta supervised the packing and flow of objects out of the archives. Pam, Peter, and Alex supervised placement of objects in the

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Movers tackle a large (and heavy!) wood filing cabinet

Movin'

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new rooms. The floorplans created earlier in the planning process were posted outside each door. They provided a general configuration for the furniture or other free-standing pieces, but smaller artifacts had to be arranged on the fly. Pam focused on room 327 where all the statues, candlesticks, and other liturgical items would be stored, while Peter focused on room 360, which contained most of the shelving for record-sized boxes and smaller containers. Jessica, as the project manager, floated between the floors helping where needed, answering questions, and making decisions.



Jessica Long, artifacts curator and manager of the move, places fragile items in room 360

One snag during the move was the operation of the infamous vintage Otis elevator, original to the 1932 portion of the building. As the only other access to the archives involved going outside and around the block to a street-level door, or up a tight spiral staircase, it cannot be emphasized how crucial the elevator was to our plan. It had been behaving for months but suddenly refused to function the morning of the first day of the move! The five professional movers were champs during the delay, hand-carrying boxes up two flights of circular stairs while the elevator technician worked to fix the problem. We were advised not

to overload the elevator and to let it cool down for at least five minutes between runs. The work was slow at first, but it was gratifying to watch as the new rooms began to fill with the artifacts. The first day ended with the bulk of the collection safely relocated in their new rooms.

Only a couple hours of work were expected for the second day but as the project neared completion, bad luck struck again when the elevator shut down with only three runs left! The Otis technician struggled to get the elevator doors to unlock and then the car to move, compelling the rest of us to scour the internet to learn who was the patron saint of elevators. Someone must have heard our prayers, because after a few hours we were up and running again. The movers rushed to finish before another setback could occur. The final item to be moved was the six-foot-long refectory table, which was squeezed diagonally into the elevator, with the legs removed and barely an inch to spare.

The artifacts collection move was a success following two long days, sore muscles, and tired feet! Thankfully, nothing was broken or misplaced. It was an odd and bittersweet moment to see the old archives space completely empty for the first time since the '70's. After cleaning and tying up loose ends, Jessica and Pam braved one last ride in the troublesome elevator before it was decommissioned the next day, putting an end to an era. But the project doesn't end there! Months of effort lie ahead as the artifacts are rearranged in the new storage rooms and a location inventory is created. The Spokane crew is looking forward to some quieter days!



That's a wrap! From left, Loretta Greene, Peter Schmid, Pam Hedquist, and Jessica Long relax after the move among dozens of liturgical artifacts.

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the shelving units in one of the rooms for the archive collections.

The movers returned on November 11 to pack the library books so Bouten could remove the shelving and reconfigure them to fit the new floorplan. Of course, no move is without a hitch or two. Just before Bouten was to schedule the shelving reinstallation, a roof drain had leaked over the weekend into the new library space due to the heavy rain, ruining the carpet. The next hitch occurred when asbestos was discovered during the carpet cleanup and required three days of remediation. Although the library was delayed a few weeks thankfully it all came to fruition!

The movers returned one last time to replace the thousands of books back on the shelving, but with some inconsistencies. Sister Joan Gallagher, former religious community librarian, volunteered to help Sisters Judy George and Liz Cole reshuffle books to get them back in proper sequence.

The provincial administration staff were settled in by Christmas and when the leadership team visited, the staff gave them a welcoming tour of the spaces and upgrades.

The team was pleased with the renovations and to see us safe and happy in our new home, where for the first-time provincial administration staff, religious community library and archives are together on one floor at Mount St. Joseph!



Sisters Judy George, Joan Gallagher, and Liz Cole sorting books

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