

# Past *Forward*

PROVIDENCE ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER • SPECIAL BACK TO SCHOOL EDITION  
Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province • Providence Health & Services

## The Way It Was in Providence Schools

FROM THE ARCHIVIST

Loretta Z. Greene, CA

### Inside

SP Spotlight

Picturing Providence

Providence Schools

The foundation of the Providence education ministries in the West was born of the necessity of survival for the sisters and their northwest mission. Yet what began as survival became one of the Sisters of Providence's major contributions to the fabric of society. Since 1857, the sisters have sponsored or staffed many levels of education: elementary, high school, university, special needs, Montessori, religious education, and formation of women religious. As in health care, growth of education ministries was limited by an insufficient number of sisters and funds; yet, the sisters have sponsored 17 academies and schools and 2 colleges in addition to staffing 19 parish and diocesan schools, and coordinating scores of summer reli-

gious education programs. The sisters were always mindful of the needs of society. Many of these schools were in rural communities in eastern Washington, Idaho and Montana, reflecting the religious community's goal of service to those in need.

Each of Bishop A.M.A. Blanchet's requests, in 1852 and 1856, for Sisters of Providence in his diocese of Nesqually, Washington Territory, directed that the sisters would engage in "works proper to their institute," education being one of them. A boarding school was not the sisters' first choice for ministry; however, they realized that schools allowed them to serve needy children and raise funds to support themselves and other social service ministries. "Americans do not count the costs when there is question

of education," Mother Joseph wrote to the Superior General in 1863. "Their liberality where education is concerned will help us to maintain our establishments for the poor.... Our orphanages are open to orphans or abandoned children of both sexes, and our school to day pupils and Catholic children who are poor.... This is why we will attempt to support our works of charity through the bias of our schools...."

The Sisters of Providence also had a strong desire to work with the native people. "Our sisters are broken hearted. In coming here, we all desired to devote ourselves most especially to the education of the Indian children," wrote Mother Joseph. The chronicles and correspondence between the sisters and clergy as well as

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### Now on Exhibit!

*Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America* is a touring exhibit sponsored and organized by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), an association of leaders of congregations of Catholic women religious in the United States. Using primary sources including photos, artifacts, and archival documents, the exhibit depicts the impact women religious had on shaping American life and culture throughout its history.

Providence Archives lent several artifacts to be used in this exhibit including this three-key box. The exhibit opened in Cincinnati (at the Cincinnati Museum Center) and will make stops in Dallas (at the Women's Museum, September-December 2009), Washington D.C. (at the Smithsonian, January-April 2010), New York City (at the Statue of Liberty Monument/Ellis Island Immigration Museum, September-December 2010), and Dubuque, Iowa (at the Mississippi River Museum, February-April 2011).





**SP SPOTLIGHT**

*Emily Hughes Dominick, CA  
Associate Archivist*

In our last issue of Past Forward, the “SP Spotlight” column profiled Sister John Gabriel Ryan whose tireless work in nursing education and its administration was a catalyst for much development in the field of nursing. In this issue, dedicated to the Sisters of Providence and their education ministries, we would be remiss if we didn’t mention Sister Mary Loretta Gately.

It is fitting to mention these two women in relation to one another: where John Gabriel was instrumental in nursing education and hospital administration, Mary Loretta was a pioneer in teacher training and school administration. Both became the namesakes of The Gately-Ryan Institute, part of the Sister Formation Program and the In-service Study and Dialogue in Theological Perspectives among religious congregations.

Though Sister Mary Loretta

## Sister Mary Loretta Gately

*Name in Religion:*

**Mary Loretta**

*Given Name:*

**Georgia Gately**

*Number in Religion:*

**671**

*Date of Birth:*

**May 2, 1869**

*Entrance to Novitiate:*

**June 12, 1885**

*Final Vows:*

**August 5, 1887**

*Date of Death:*

**September 12, 1946**



dedicated much of her life to education, she herself had little formal training. When she entered the religious community at the age of 16, she had finished only one year of high school in the public schools of Portland. At the age of 24, after teaching at several Providence sponsored schools, she was tasked with founding the high school at Sacred Heart Academy in Missoula, where she served as the principal and sole teacher. Though educational requirements and standards were nascent in the State of Montana, Sister Mary Loretta outlined a rigorous four-year plan for the high school students who started under her

tutelage in September of 1893. While planning the lessons for her students, Mary Loretta, too, was studying making sure to stay one step ahead of her classes in the various subjects to be covered from botany to astronomy, and literature to geometry. She was eventually named Superior of Sacred Heart Academy, and under her leadership, the Academy was accredited by the State of Montana in 1909.

Proving her success in both teaching and administration, Mary Loretta was appointed to Directress of Studies of Sacred Heart Province in 1911 and the following year her position was extended to include St. Ignatius Province. Here her legacy and impact were most notable in the education of not only the students, but also the sister teachers. She encouraged intellectual development by way of summer courses and further education. She pushed for sisters to become certified teachers before this became state mandated and made sure that Providence schools were doing what it took to become accredited.

She held her position as  
*continued on page 6*



**verbatim**

Become leaders in your own line, no matter where your work lies. Christ trained His followers so that they could do without His visible Presence. So also should you train those associated with you or under you so that the works of the community may grow and prosper.

**-Sister Mary Loretta**

*Excerpt from her reply to  
Jubilee Greetings, 1937*



## PICTURING PROVIDENCE

Peter F. Schmid, CA, Visual Resources Archivist

A column highlighting archival photographs and other resources that provide visual documentation of the Sisters of Providence. Contact Peter at 206-923-4012 or peter.schmid@providence.org.

### A Lifelong Educator

Lucille Marie Ernsdorff was born in Yakima in 1913, one of ten children in a very traditional Catholic family which produced two priests and two women religious (her sister Jeanne Marie, born Marcella Marie, also became a Sister of Providence). After attending St. Joseph Academy in Yakima, for grades 7-10, and Holy Names Academy in Seattle, grades 11-12, Lucille Marie pronounced vows in the religious community in 1931 and became Sister Paul Marie.

Sister Paul Marie's teaching career was long and varied. Between 1933 and 1966, she taught at eleven schools in Washington, California, and Alaska. As happened with many educators in the religious community, teaching at St. Joseph Academy was something of a homecoming; it was her first mission as a professed sister, when she taught fifth grade in 1933, and more than 30 years later it was her final post.

After St. Joseph Academy, she turned to parish work in religious education and working with Asian and Central American refugees teaching English as a Second Language



Sister Paul Marie Ernsdorff explains the anatomy of the crayfish to sophomore girls in biology class at St. Joseph Academy (Yakima, Washington), circa 1965. (Image #SP3975.56).

(ESL). The image included here captures her last year in the academy setting. She taught biology along with a religion course and supervised a homeroom. That year she also

oversaw the construction of the outdoor Nativity scene by the sophomore class.

Sister Paul Marie died on October 13, 1997, at the age of 84, with 65 years as a religious. §



Sister Paul Marie made this little piece of art while on her first mission at St. Joseph Academy, 1933-1934. In 1993, she sent the piece to then-archivist Sister Rita Bergamini along with a note saying it was made of feathers from pigeons that roosted near the school. She also remarked, "Just imagine the number of years these feather have endured while encased 'airtight' between tissue paper!" We're glad they endured!



## Providence Schools of Mother Joseph Province

Beginning with the foundation of Providence Academy in Vancouver, Washington, in 1856, the Sisters of Providence sponsored or staffed over forty schools across Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Montana and Alaska. Today the ministries of the Sisters of Providence and Providence Health & Services are more heavily focused on health care and social services, but University of Great Falls (Great Falls, Montana), Providence High School (Burbank, California), and Providence Montessori School (Portland, Oregon) remain active and successful schools.



### *Vancouver*

- ☞ Providence Academy, 1856-1966
- ☞ St. Joseph Parish School, 1954-1978
- ☞ Our Lady of Lourdes Parish School, 1955-1990

### *Steilacoom*

- ☞ St. Joseph School, 1863-1875

### *Walla Walla*

- ☞ St. Vincent de Paul Academy, 1864-1959
- ☞ St. Patrick/Assumption Grade School/Central Catholic Middle School, 1928-1980
- ☞ St. Patrick High School, 1932-1959
- ☞ De Sales High School, 1959-1972

### *Tulalip*

- ☞ Our Lady of Seven Dolours School, 1868-1901

### *Colville*

- ☞ Sacred Heart School, 1873-1921

### *Yakima*

- ☞ St. Joseph Academy, 1875-1969

### *Cowlitz*

- ☞ Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School, 1876-1898

### *Olympia*

- ☞ St. Michael School Parish School, 1881-1973

### *Sprague*

- ☞ St. Joseph School, 1886-1965

### *Moxee*

- ☞ Holy Rosary Parish School, 1915-1968

### *Seattle*

- ☞ Holy Family Parish School, 1927-1972
- ☞ St. Catherine Parish School, 1941-1975
- ☞ Bishop Blanchet High School, 1954-1985
- ☞ John F. Kennedy Memorial High School, 1966-1995

### *Tacoma*

- ☞ Sacred Heart Parish School, 1929-1970


### *Issaquah*

- ☞ Providence Heights College of Sister Formation, 1961-1969



*Children and teachers of Providence Academy (Vancouver, Washington) turn out at the train station to greet Bishop Thomas Connolly en route to Seattle to assume the archbishopric, 1948. (Image # 22.E2.1)*

*Sister Katherine Ann Markel with a student in her classroom at St. Finbar School (Burbank, California), 1957 (Image #: 181.B1.2)*

**Oregon**

*Portland*

- ☞ Emily School, 1962-1995
- ☞ Providence Montessori School, 1964-

*DeSmet*


- ☞ Mary Immaculate School, 1878-1974

*Wallace*


- ☞ Our Lady of Lourdes Academy, 1906-1969

*Kellogg*

- ☞ St. Rita Parish School, 1960-1971



**Idaho**




**California**

*Burbank*

- ☞ St. Finbar Parish School, 1945-1984
- ☞ Providence High School, 1955-

*Sun Valley*

- ☞ Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish School, 1950-1971



**Montana**

*St. Ignatius*

- ☞ St. Ignatius School, 1864-1914

*Missoula*

- ☞ Sacred Heart Academy, 1873-1974
- ☞ St. Francis Xavier Parish School, 1927-1980

*Frenchtown*

- ☞ St. Martin School, 1881-1882
- ☞ St. John the Baptist Parish School, 1915-1924

*Great Falls*


- ☞ St. Thomas Home, 1910-1982
- ☞ University of Great Falls, 1932-
- ☞ St. Gerard Parish School, 1947-1974

*Roundup*

- ☞ St. Benedict Parish School, 1933-1939

*Glasgow*

- ☞ St. Raphael Parish School, 1949-1971



**Alaska**

*Fairbanks*

- ☞ Immaculate Conception Parish School, 1946-1976
- ☞ Monroe High School, 1946-1976

*Anchorage*

- ☞ Catholic Junior High School, 1961-1967

## Sister Mary Loretta

*continued from page 2*

Directress of Schools -- later named Directress of Studies-- for nearly forty years. All along she was also improving herself: in 1916 she began taking courses at Creighton University, and she received her bachelor of science degree in 1920.

It is impossible to capture anyone's life in this short space or by sifting through the papers left behind. Nevertheless, much can be gleaned from personal writings, correspondence, and speeches, not to mention the remembrances and histories that become a part of a sister's file. Sister Mary Loretta was a highly creative and artistic person as is obvious from some of the artifacts she created during her life including the sample books used as manuals in home-economics classes (two of these are pictured in this article). Above all,

## Did you know...

Providence High School in Burbank, California, was named a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence for the 1997-98 school year by the United States Department of Education. Of the 110,000 schools in the nation, 437 were nominated for consideration, and only 166 were awarded this distinction.

This program spotlights the nation's most successful schools by honoring excellence in leadership, teaching, curriculum, student achievement, and parental involvement.

she appreciated and always tried to attain the beauty which might be revealed through art, music, a well-worded letter, refined manners, the natural world, and ultimately the divine.



*Sisters Lucille Dean, principal, and Mary Hawkins, vice-principal, accepting the Blue Ribbon School award in Washington, D.C.*

For more information about Sister Mary Loretta, read *Daughter of Charity: Life of Sister Mary Loretta Gateley, F.C.S.P.* by Dorothy Lentz, SP, 1957. §

## Back to School: My Archival Training at the Western Archives Institute

*Pam Hedquist, Assistant Archivist-Technical*

This past June I had the privilege of attending Western Archives Institute (WAI) in

Berkeley, California. WAI is an intensive, two-week program that is offered annually to provide instruction in basic archival practices. The curriculum included sessions in preservation, arrangement and description of archives, appraisal methods, and ethical issues among other topics, all taught by leading archival educators.

The Institute also featured site visits to historical records repositories. Some of the site visits included: Levi Strauss & Co. (my favorite) which owns a pair of jeans

from 1879, the oldest in the world; Graduate Theological Union, which is the largest and most diverse partnership of seminaries and graduate schools in the U.S.; and the Bancroft Library, which includes the Mark Twain Papers and Project, and is one of the largest and most heavily used libraries of manuscripts, rare books, and unique materials in the United States.

I truly enjoyed the experience of Berkeley and meeting and getting to know the fellow students. A few of us ventured out on our own going to dinner, movies, shopping or just enjoying the campus grounds and history. I can honestly say that I look at things a little differently now -- from an "archives" point of view. §



*Group photograph of the Western Archives Institute students on the University of California, Berkeley Campus*

## Find us on flickr®

Providence Archives is now on Flickr, a popular web site for online photo sharing. Visit our "photostream" at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/provarchives/> Flickr allows viewers to view and add comments to the images; we hope that this will be a forum for more interaction with the archives.

New photos are added periodically to our stream, so check back often!



### *From the Archivist*

*continued from page 1*

Native American chiefs contain frequent aspirations yet it was not until 1864 that the first formal ministry was realized at St. Ignatius, Montana. Today, this Providence ministry continues in Idaho, Montana and Washington.

The Sisters of Providence were not the only religious community in education ministries in the Northwest. In 1859, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, a congregation recognized as educators of young women, especially in the fine arts, came to Oregon to establish schools. Recognizing that their own schools had a more basic curriculum, the Sisters of Providence made a concerted effort not to compete with the Holy Names sisters. For this reason, the Providence sisters did not establish any schools in Oregon, other than those programs that were later associated with Providence Child Center. They also knew that music was integral to an educational program competitive with the public schools and were adamant about its inclusion in the curriculum at all Providence schools.

Predicting the future shift of education ministry in favor of health and social services, Sister Blandine, one of the five foundresses and a teacher in Vancouver, wrote in 1897, "It seems to me that for us today, hospitals are what should be most dear to our hearts.... We are short of subjects familiar with English for our schools, and our novitiate receives regularly each year enough members who have the good will to work in the hospitals. Other works are gradually decreasing bit by bit, but the hospitals are growing day by day." At this time, active schools and hospitals

### *Call for Donations*



Do you have pictures, artifacts, scrapbooks, or memorabilia related to a Sisters of Providence school or hospital? Consider donating your collection to Providence Archives. Contact us by telephone, e-mail, or through our web site!

### For more information...

**Visit:** Providence Archives, Seattle, Washington, houses a collection of historical materials for each Providence school in Mother Joseph Province. Contact the archives for access.

**See:** Artifacts, photographs and mementoes are now on exhibit in the Reference Room at the Archives.

**Read:** Histories of various Providence schools are available through the religious community library or Providence Archives:

📖 *The Way It Was in Providence Schools*, Dorothy Lentz, SP

📖 *Magic Valley*, Ellis Lucia

📖 *Providence in Alaska*, Pauline Higgins, SP

📖 *A Shining from the Mountains*, Providencia Tolan, SP

📖 *Sisters of Providence: The Missoula Mission, 1873-1923*, Loyola Sacred Heart High School

📖 *Archives and Accounts of the St. Thomas Orphans' Home*, Tim J. Kennedy

were fairly evenly divided (12 and 14, respectively). In the decade prior to Sister Blandine's comment, eight hospitals were established versus one school.

From the early- to mid-20th century, 30 new ministries were established, evenly divided between education and health care. Also during this time a new type of religious education of youth was taking place – religious vacation schools. From the 1920s through 1960s the teaching sisters travelled to far-reaches of the western states conducting religious vacation schools during the summer school recess. During two-week periods, the sisters reached out to countless children without access to religious education and prepared them for reception of the sacraments.

The Sisters of Providence continued to expand their education ministry in the 1950s and early 1960s, primarily as faculty at the rapidly increasing number of parochial schools in response to the post-war population boom. An important education ministry at this time was the College of Sister Formation, at Providence Heights, Issaquah, Washington, founded in 1961. It came about by the growing understanding that sisters needed more education to minister in the changing world and provided an accredited

liberal-arts education to sisters from five different religious communities.

Following the Second Vatican Council, from 1966 to 1976 the Sisters of Providence experienced a heart-wrenching decade of change. They closed the College of Sister Formation, the two oldest academies (Vancouver and Yakima), and withdrew from almost all the parish schools. Similar painful closures occurred in health care, for a total of 26 ministries, leaving behind communities they had served for over 100 years. The decline in the number of sisters and antiquated buildings requiring extensive remodeling, which the sisters could not afford, were some of the main reasons.

Today, all that remains of the Providence-sponsored educational system is one high school, one university and the children's programs at Providence Child Center. Several Sisters of Providence continue in the education ministry as teachers in ESL, university professors, women's programs, intensive learning and childhood education. While it may no longer be done for the survival of the mission, the sisters are responding to the needs of local communities and continuing their contributions to the social fabric. §

*Providence Oakland College of Nursing Alumni and Instructors*

*You are cordially invited to attend the 12th Annual  
Providence Oakland College of Nursing Alumni Holiday Tea*

*Friday, December 11, 2009, 11:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.*

*Come remember days gone by, renew friendships, reconnect with classmates and  
former instructors and celebrate the 2009 holiday season!*

*For more information, contact*

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