Sister’s of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, U.S.-Ontario Province

Finding Aid for Collection MS 8

Astoria (Oregon) School & Convent Collection (1896-1973)

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Astoria (Oregon) School & Convent Collection (1896-1973)

MS 8

**Extent and Forms of Material:** 7 cubic ft. est. 16 boxes (bound books and folders)

**Creator:** Members of the Star of the Sea Convent and School

**Description of Records:** A majority of this collection is made up of large hardback notebooks that contain the school and house Chronicles, a chronological narrative of the daily events of the school and convent. Additional notebooks hold registration, attendance, and other records related to the convent. Other materials include news clippings of school and convent events, particularly the final closure of the high school and the departure of the Sisters of the Holy Names from their Astoria home, as well as other events concerning the sisters and students who spent time there.

**Repository:** Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, U.S.—Ontario Province. Holy Names Heritage Center, 17435 Holy Names Drive, Lake Oswego, OR 97034.

**Collection Number:** MS 8

**Processing Note:** Processed by Jessie Sweeney, April 2012.

**Preferred Citation:** [item identification], Astoria (Oregon) school & convent collection, Archives of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, U.S.–Ontario Province, Lake Oswego, Oregon.

**Organizational History:** In 1896, Mother John the Baptist and the first Sisters of the Holy Names came to Astoria, Oregon looking for a place of solitude in which the sisters could live and perform their ministry. For the most part the school enjoyed a good number of students throughout the sister’s eighty years spent educating young people. The building was completed September 5th, 1896, and the first class of eighteen students arrived on September 14th. Just two years later enrollment for grades first to eighth had risen to ninety-two day students, in addition to six who boarded on the property. By 1905, enrollment had been declining, leading the sisters to bring boys into the school. That year they welcomed thirty eight day students and six boarders, including seven boys between the ages of five and eight years old. By 1920 Holy Names had eight sisters and one of their largest classes, 128 day students and ten boarders, forty-two in the first and second grade classes alone. Throughout the next four decades, enrolment had its ups and downs. For a time starting in 1928 the sisters educated students all the way through high school. Despite the “persistent opposition” to the upper grades, June 6th of 1929 brought the first two-student high school graduating class of Star of the Sea. Some of the older students ended up being accepted as novices in the same convent where they had gone to school.

By 1966, led by eleven sisters, enrollment had risen to 320 students, 149 boys and 171 girls. In 1968 the Catholic archdiocese voted to close the seventh and eighth grade program at the school. Reasons for this change included financial difficulties, a lack of teaching Sisters, and the inability to hire lay teachers to fill needed positions. Those changes resulted in enrollments for the remaining six grades at 145 students for the following school year.

The Sisters, along with the school, survived many challenging events throughout their decades in Astoria including the financial crisis of 1907. The effects were felt in Astoria in 1908, coming “swift and unforeseen”, with banks refusing to lend money just after the sisters had purchased a new home site for the school and boarding house (a benefactor stepped in to help, lending the sisters’ money to complete their project). The school and convent also survived many local challenges, among them the “Great Fire of 1912” which burned the church to the ground but left their property untouched (<http://www.visitseaside.org/documents/history.html>).

Daily life at the convent and school included devotions, lessons, school programs and musical performances. The Chronicles tell of special visitors to the school, orchestra concerts, and yearly opening and closing ceremonies. The authors write of the great musical talents of the student orchestra, which often performed concerts for the public, and various daily and special activities happening at the convent and school.

On January 7th, 1973, with ninety students in six grades attending the school, it was announced that the sisters would withdraw from teaching at the Star of the Sea School. The Sisters of the Holy Names had decided to cut back their commitments in some schools around the state of Oregon, including Astoria. The sisters had planned on moving to the Miles House in March, but that plan fell through when the necessary funds were lost “with President Nixon’s cutbacks”. In May the remaining sisters moved from their convent to a four bedroom house located in Astoria at 813 11th Street. The building used to house the sisters and educate students was purchased by the Clatsop County Youth Development Association to start a home for disturbed children. However, the education of students continued on with the Canada based Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist taking over management of the school.

\*The Star of the Sea School continued to educate students up until the 2010-2011 school year when it decided to close.

**Arrangement**

The collection materials are arranged in seven series within sixteen boxes (identified as F1-F16):

**Series 1**: Attendance Records: Grade School and High School

This series includes 36 attendance notebooks listing names of students in each class with attendance checkmarks throughout the school year. Grades covered vary. Books from 1896 to 1925-1926 are for the sister’ Academy; books from 1926-1927 are for Star of the Sea School. This series is arranged chronologically, then by grade number.

**Series 2**: Financial records of convent and school

This series contains ledgers and year-end reports concerning the financial situation of the convent and school from 1896 to 1970. Ledgers contain records of receipts and expenditures for the convent and school. This series contains nine oversize ledgers, along with three folders with additional documents. This series is arranged by record type, then chronologically.

**Series 3**: Chronicles

This series includes five oversized hardbound volumes and two loose leaf documents that document in journal form the daily events at the convent and school from 1896 to 1974. Within the volumes, the material is kept by school year and runs roughly from August to August. Volumes one through five consist of handwritten narratives while the loose leaf chronicles are typed. These are arranged chronologically.

**Series 4**: Astoria convent: other records

This series contains three notebooks and two document folders regarding the daily lives and happenings at the convent from 1896 to 1958. This series is arranged by record type, and then alphabetically based on the item’s title.

**Series 5**: Academy and Star of the Sea School records

This series consists of three oversized notebooks and seven folders containing loose-leaf school documents spread out over the more than 115 years of the life of the school. Included is a student registration notebook listing the names of the students attending each September to June school-year. Important items to note include photographs of President Kennedy’s visit to Astoria including 19 black and white 8”x10” images and one 8”x10” that is a professional, color photo of the president. Note: These photographs were originally housed in plastic sheeting within a red binder and were removed for preservation reasons. This series also contains articles and pictures regarding Star of the Sea’s 100th anniversary, in addition to articles regarding the closing of the school. The arrangement had been compiled by record type, then chronologically.

**Series 6**: Property Records and Bequests

This series consists of four folders containing documents that describe the sisters’ Astoria property and include several bequests of both money and property, spanning the years of 1896 to 1964. This series has a chronological arrangement.

**Series 7**: Scrapbooks

This series contains two oversized scrapbooks with news clippings regarding events at the Star of the Sea Convent and school (1953-1963). This series is arranged chronologically.

**Subjects**

Schools-Astoria

Catholic Schools

Cities- Astoria, Oregon

Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, Oregon

Father Leopold Dieleman (1833-1907)

**Container List**

**Series 1: Attendance Records: Grade School and High School**

Box F1

Attendance Grades 2-3-4, 4.5”x8”, (1896-1904)

Attendance, 4.5”x8”, (1896-1904)

Attendance, 9”x7”, (1901-1908)

Attendance 5th-6th grades, 9”x7”, (1902?-1910)

Attendance Grades 1-2, 9”x7”, (1907-1913)

Box F2

Attendance Gr. 1-2, 4.5”x8” to 9”x7”, (1915-1918)

Attendance Gr. 5-6, 4.5”x8” to 9”x7”, (1915-1920)

Attendance Gr. 1-2, 4.5”x8” to 9”x7”, (1919-1914)

Attendance Gr. 7-8, 4.5”x8” to 9”x7”, (1919-1922) Gr. 3-4 (1924-25)

Attendance Gr. 3-4, 4.5”x8” to 9”x7”, (1919-1924)

Attendance Gr. 5-8, 4.5”x8” to 9”x7”, (1921-1927)

Box F3

Attendance 1st and 2nd Gr., 4.5x7, (1925-1928)

Attendance 5th and 6th Gr., 4.5x7, (1925-1929)

Attendance H.S., 5.5x8, (1925-1919)

Attendance 5-6-7-8-HS, 5.5x8, (1927)

Box F4

Attendance Gr. 1and 2, 5x10, (1931-1935)

Attendance Gr. 1-2, 5x10, (1939-1943)

Attendance H.S. 3rd and 4th year, 5x10, (1943-1947)

Attendance Gr. 5-6, 5x10, (1943-1952)

Attendance Gr. 7-8, 5x10, (1945-1952)

Attendance Gr. 3-4, 5x10, (1945-1951)

Attendance Gr. 1-2, 5x10, (1947-1952)

Attendance Gr. 2, 5x10, (1949-1951)

Box F5

Attendance Gr. 2-3, 5.5”x8.5” (1951-1956)

Attendance Gr. 3-5, 5.5”x8.5” (1951-1957)

Attendance Gr. 1, 5.5”x8.5” (1952-1958)

Attendance Gr. 5-6, 5.5”x8.5” (1952-1957)

Attendance Gr. 7-8, 5.5”x8.5” (1952-1956)

Attendance Gr. 3, 5.5”x8.5” (1955-1957)

Attendance Gr. 7-8, 5.5”x8.5” (1956-1961)

Attendance Gr. 2, 5.5”x8.5” (1956-1962)

Attendance Gr. 3, 5.5”x8.5” (1957-1961)

Attendance Gr. 4, 5.5”x8.5” (1957-1963)

Attendance Gr. 1, 5.5”x8.5” (1958-1964)

Attendance Grade 5, 5.5”x8.5” (1959-1963)

Attendance Gr. 6, 5.5”x8.5” (1966-1973)

**Series 2: Financial Records**

Box F7

Astoria Monthly Receipts, 13”x15” (1957-1970)

Astoria Monthly Expenses, 13”x15” (1960-1968)

Astoria Monthly Expenses, 13”x15” (1968-1970)

Box F8

Account book, 11.5”x16” (1896-1908)

Account book, 11.5”x16” (1908-1920)

Box F9

Account book, 11”x14” (1896-1908)

Account book, 9”x14” (1920-1923)

Account book, 11”x14” (1923-1926)

Box F10

Account book, 11”x14” (1926-1930)

Box F14

Folder 8 Star of the Sea Convent Financial Reports (1896-1951)

Folder 9 Star of the Sea Convent Financial Reports (1951-1971)

Folder 10 Star of the Sea House Reports (1896-1917)

**Series 3: Chronicles**

Box F11

Volume 1, 18”x24”, (1896-1928)

Volume 2, 18”x24”, (1928-1937)

Box F12

Volume 3, 18”x24”, (August 1, 1937-November 13, 1945)

Volume 4, 18”x24”, (November 17, 1945-October 7, 1953)

Volume 5, 18”x24”, (October 7, 1953-June 23, 1966)

Box F14

Folder 7 Loose leaf chronicles (1966-1974)

Box F15

Folder 1 Loose leaf chronicles (1966-1974) (Duplicates of Box F14, Folder 7)

**Series 4: Star of the Sea Convent - Other Records**

Box F13

Red and black notebook- “Convent Days” by the Sisters of Star of the Sea Convent (1953-unknown)

Red and Black notebook - “Nominations of the House of Astoria” (1896-1954)

Red and Black notebook - “Vows received Astoria” (1918 to 1938)

Box F14

Folder 5 Document – “Near murder in a nunnery” by an unknown sister, no date.

Folder 6 Document regarding arrival of Sister Rose Carmel as convent superior (8/25/1958)

**Series 5: Academy and Star of the Sea School records**

Box F13

Black notebook- “Official Register of the League of the Sacred Heart”, n.d.

Red and black notebook- Student registration book (1896)

Black notebook- Star of the Sea School student registration book (1939-1952)

Box F14

Folder 1 Astoria Star of the Sea- Articles and Records (1925-2011)

Folder 2 Saint Mary’s Star of the Sea- Publications and Articles (1925- 2011)

Folder 3 Student Work (1954)

Folder 4 Photographs: John F. Kennedy’s Visit to Tounge Point, Astoria (1963)

Of special note is one photograph shows President Kennedy with his advisors walking from their airplane. President Kennedy is waving to the crowd of students and other visitors.

Box F15

Folder 2 Schools Closed- Astoria (1968-1971)

Folder 3 Holy Names Sisters Leaving Astoria (1974)

Folder 4 Photographs- Astoria Sustaining Friendships (March 11, 2007)

**Series 6: Property Records and Bequests**

Box F14

Folder 8 Documents regarding the Shively lot additions to the Holy Names’ property (1896-1907)

Folder 9 Documents- Property (1901-1964)

Folder 10 Document regarding Astoria rental property (1926)

Folder 11 Documents regarding the Astoria convent (n.d.)

**Series 7: Scrapbooks**

Box F16

Scrapbook (1953-1963)

Scrapbook (1953-1964)

Narrative

For this project I worked with Sarah Cantor, the Director of Archives at the Holy Names Heritage Center in Lake Oswego, Oregon. The Astoria (Oregon) School and Convent Collection was one that she was very interested in getting processed, and although it was a lot bigger than what was required for this assignment, I knew I would have enough time to complete it. This collection was appealing to me in that it consisted of several different types of items, such as journals and account records, which I had never worked with before. Here I will describe the process I went through in making decisions about how to process and describe this collection.

The first thing I did was check with Sarah to make sure all of the material in the collection had the same provenance. According to the collection records everything belonged to the Star of the Sea convent or the school which was run by the nuns there. While examining and sorting through the collection the first time, I immediately found that there were certain types of records that would make logical series. Some of the series I picked out at first included school attendance records, the Chronicles, a journal with frequent entries concerning the daily happenings at the convent and school, account ledgers, property records, and correspondence. I also noted that some records dealt with the Star of the Sea school, others the convent, and still others that dealt with both. I made sure to note what records went with each section of the organization. One issue that was clear from the start was that I knew I would have to come up with a different physical arrangement from what I would do intellectually in the final finding aid. This was due to the fact that the collection consisted of not only paper records that would need to be housed in archival folders, but there were also large bound notebooks which would need to be housed in oversized archival containers. Also, it would not necessarily be possible to store all of one series together in its own box. After discussing this issue with Sarah, it was decided that I would have a separate physical arrangement than what was done in the intellectual organization of this collection.

The attendance records consisted of notebooks that were all the same relative size. These then fit into six medium size flat boxes which I used for my first series. Although some of the notebooks overlapped each other chronologically, I was able to group them into six different boxes within ranges of years. For the second series I grouped all of the financial records together. This included ledgers of expenses and income for the community, and well as where that money was spent. I also included any other records that had to do with finances, including year-end reports of the financial status of the Astoria house. After that I was left with several smaller notebooks which contained information about the nuns at the convent and students at the school. I decided, for the time being, to group those together as other convent and school records. A last binder contained eight by ten photographs of President Kennedy and his advisors on a visit to Astoria in 1963, according to the accompanying note. As I know it would be important for these photographs to be preserved, I removed them from their original housing and put them into folders separated with pieces of archival safe paper in between. While I knew other preservation measures would be completed later, I knew these were important photographs that required placement in protective housing. From there I was left with two scrapbooks containing various newspaper articles concerning the school and convent, which I decided would be most useful in their own series. Because this seemed to be a major event for the area, and photographs of the former president would more than likely be of great interest to a variety of people, I chose to put in a little more detail by adding an item level description here, being one of the photographs of the president and his advisors.

From there what remained was a group of documents which had their own labels on the folders that held them. At this point I chose to keep their original arrangement as they were and label them as their original folders had done. I knew I would probably come back to these and review their contents later. At that point I felt I had a decent handle on the arrangement and housing part of the project so I moved on to getting an organizational history put together for the finding aid. I did some research online but quickly found out, along with a consultation from Sarah, that all I would need for the writing an organizational history would come from reading the Chronicles from the collection. This was where the sisters recorded their own history of their house. I sat down and began skimming the large notebooks. This seemed like a daunting task at first as there was so much to read. However, with the help of some summary pages in the Chronicles and lots of skimming, I was able to create a short history of the organization. Sarah suggested I look for the opening and closing dates, new schools beginning, changes in enrollment, when the sisters left, and a note about when the school finally closed completely. Within the chronicles, yearly listing of the number of sisters and students at the convent were very helpful, as were the short titles that began each journal entry. I noted at about each decade the number of sisters, boys, and girls attending the school to get an idea of student fluctuations throughout the decades. I also tried to get a sense of what life was like at the convent for both the sisters and students. From this I was able to write a short history of the organization.

At this point I was able to have a draft of my finding aid written. Because I wanted this to be as useful as possible to Sarah and those who would use this collection I consulted with her as to what specifically she wanted included. Her choices are reflected in the finding aid above. I helped her create labels for each of the boxes in the collection. Because of the space required to house this collection she will go back to note the location in the stacks where each box will be stored.

The physical arrangement of the material in this collection was based on the form and size of the items, with the oversize notebooks stored in large, flat lying Hollinger boxes, smaller notebooks stored in medium sized boxes, and the documents kept in the traditional upright Hollinger boxes. In terms of the Intellectual arrangement of the series within the collection, most of the collection, including the account records and Chronicles naturally seemed to fit in a chronological arrangement. The school and convent records could also be arranged by record type. I used a mix of these arrangement methods throughout the collection, depending on what seemed right for that particular series.

Using this collection presented many challenges for this assignment. Not only did the large size of the collection present a time challenge for processing, the variety of forms of the material presented challenges as well. However, I was grateful for the experience this collection gave me for many of these same reasons, and the repository was able to have another collection documented for them.