



The Archival Spirit, February 2012

Newsletter of the Archivists of Religious Collections Section, Society of American Archivists

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From the Chair: New ARCS Sparks!

By Terry Reilly

Archivist, University of Calgary

This is a creative moment in the world of the Archives of Religious Collections Section. The section has a lot of new energy. We are working ahead on several initiatives while continuing our important role of outreach to new religious archives and archivists. Do you know someone who is just starting out as a religious archivist or someone who is returning to the work after an absence or sabbatical? Encourage them to get in touch with ARCS. We want to incorporate as many new perspectives as we can. Are you associated with a regional religious archivists group? We will be excited to hear what is happening at your area meetings, exhibits or programming plans.

Since our annual general meeting in Chicago we have held two steering committee conference calls. We know that regular communication is essential to effective planning. Also, based on your responses at the annual meeting, I have forwarded lists of your interests to members of the steering committee. Don't be shy. Feel free to contact any of us with ideas, articles for the newsletter and other offers of help.

We have decided to migrate the content of the ARCS website to the SAA Drupal site. This project poses some challenges to our ongoing outreach efforts since the SAA site is a service for SAA members. The steering committee agreed to keep our current site active for up to a year while we work these challenges through. We will have one more call before San Diego.

Thanks to Anne Thomason for her generous offer to assist in coordinating and producing the newsletter while Paul Daniels continues to serve Luther Seminary in an expanded role.

Elsewhere, in the newsletter you will see that this we are piloting a "service opportunity" at the Jacobs and Cushman San Diego Food Bank: <http://sandiegofoodbank.org>. This will replace the section reception. I encourage you to join the steering committee at the food bank and help make a small difference that matters to our host community.

Do you have a new technology project that is working for your institution? When we reviewed our strategic priorities last year we noted that we wanted ARCS to be a forum for "workable solutions" to the challenges that electronic records pose to smaller repositories. We will be looking to develop this area in our communications planning for 2012-2013.

We are looking seriously into changing our leadership structure so that the Vice-Chair and Chair serve for one-year terms. If the section adopts this change it will mean that more of us can contribute to ARCS on an ongoing basis. More immediately we need a point person for our Models and Resources work. If you can assist please be in touch with me.

Terry Reilly
Chair, ARCS Steering Committee
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From the Vice Chair

By Colleen McFarland, Mennonite Church USA Archives, Goshen, Indiana

Although the snow is flying in Indiana as I write this, I am looking ahead to the upcoming SAA meeting (August 6-11, 2012) in warm and sunny San Diego. This year at SAA, ARCS will try something different. Rather than hosting a reception for ARCS members at a local religious repository, we will instead sponsor a service opportunity. On Wednesday, August 8th, up to 35 members of ARCS will travel to the Jacobs and Cushman's San Diego Food Bank to inspect, sort, or package food. We are scheduled to work from 9 AM to noon, and transportation arrangements are in the works.

Founded in 1977, the Jacobs and Cushman's San Diego Food Bank distributes over 15 million pounds of food per year. It not only provides direct food aid to people in need, but also partners with other agencies to provide food aid to 350 San Diego County nonprofit charities. In addition, the food bank advocates for the hungry and educates the public about hunger issues. For more information about the food bank, please visit its Web site: <http://sandiegofoodbank.org/>

If you plan to attend SAA, I hope that you will consider donating some of your time to this service project. This will be a great way for us to get to know each other better and to give back to the community hosting our annual meeting. Registration information will be posted to the ARCS listserv in early June.



Archives Workshop in Kenya

By Sr. Mary Denis Maher, Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine

Sr. Mary Denis Maher, Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, Richfield, OH, and Sr. Mary Serbacki, Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, Stella Niagara, NY, will be conducting a basic introduction to archives workshop, May 27-June 1, 2012, in Nairobi, Kenya.

The African Sisters Educational Collaborative (ASEC) requested that Sr. Mary Denis develop an outline of a basic archives information workshop for communities of Sisters in Kenya, Africa. The ASEC is a consortium of six Catholic colleges in Pennsylvania, who have funded various educational programs for the Association of Sisterhoods in Kenya (AOSK).

Many of the communities have been in existence for 40 and 50 years, but the Sisters have limited or no formal archives training and want to set up or improve their historical materials. Titled "Religious Archives, Sacred Trust and Earthly Realities," the workshop will cover topics such as an introduction to archives particularly in a religious setting, preservation and conservation, access to records, and writing a community history. The workshop will include lecture and many hands-on sessions.

Currently, Sr. Mary Denis and Sr. Mary Serbacki are reviewing questionnaires they sent to the

prospective participants so they can better accommodate the needs of the group. Both Certified Archivists, the presenters have both served as presidents of ACWR (Archivists of Congregations of Women Religious) and are members of SAA as well as their regional groups.

If anyone has advice to offer us, please feel free to contact us. smdm@srsfcharity.org or serbacki@gmail.com

DePauw Celebrates 175th Anniversary

By Wesley W. Wilson, CA, Coordinator of Archives & Special Collections, DePauw University Archives

DePauw University is celebrating its 175th anniversary this year with a series of events. First was the January 10, 2012 Charter Day event at the Green Center for the Performing Arts. President Brian Casey spoke to the hundreds in attendance along with Vice-President Marcia Latta, Greencastle mayor, Sue Murray and United Methodist Bishop Michael Coyner. Bishop Coyner referred back to the founding of Indiana Asbury University (DePauw since 1884) by a committee of Methodist Episcopal ministers in the mid-1830s including Robert Roberts (first married M.E. bishop) and Calvin Ruter whose memoir is found in the DePauw Archives.



Students at the first college building dubbed The Edifice, circa 1870

The Archives has had a leading role in the celebration planning and involvement in the activities so far. A slide show of 120 images from the Archives was shown at the Charter Day event and is available to faculty and staff who would like to show it to others groups throughout the coming year. The Archives has also worked closely with students. Last summer a senior history major, Sam Spahn, wrote his thesis about Methodist bishop and DePauw president, Lemuel Murlin, who began to change the climate for students in the 1920s, most famously for allowing dancing on campus. Sam then headed up a team of students in January to research, prepare and mount an exhibit at the Putnam County (Indiana) Museum under the supervision of director, Tanis Monday. The students worked extensively with Archives staff throughout the month locating information and resources to use in the exhibit. The DePauw history exhibit is now complete and a grand opening is being planned.



Gala celebration at the Green Center, DePauw University
Jan. 10, 2012

Other activities where the Archives had a role include a presentation to DePauw parents over Family Weekend last fall and to one local community group so far. The Archives plans to mount an exhibit on DePauw's history for Annual Conference in the spring and present to and hold an open house for alumni returning to campus in June. Celebrations of major anniversaries are always a chance for archives to shine. Looking for ways to assist others with remembering the institutional history and celebrating the anniversary are valuable opportunities that no archives should pass

up.

Lights, Cameras, Archives in Action: The Diocese of Olympia Archives Begins a Blog!

By Diane Wells, CA, Archivist and Records Manager, Episcopal Diocese of Olympia

As Archivist and Records Manager for the Diocese of Olympia, I am always looking for ways to tell our diocesan community about the many resources we have in the diocesan archives, to communicate the history of this diocese and to assist our congregations in taking care of their own records and archives.

Over the years I've written historical articles for our diocesan newspaper, composed a monthly column featuring archives and records management topics for our diocesan newsletter, offered workshops and made countless presentations. In addition the archives website <http://www.ecww.org/departments/archive> features collection information along with our archives and records management policies and procedures.

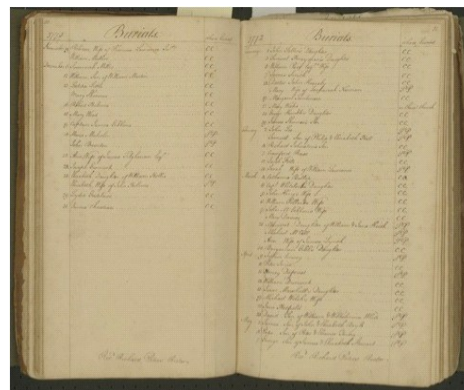
So, it was only natural to take the next step and reach out with an archives blog. Called Archives in Action, it can be found at http://www.ecww.org/blogs/all_posts. The intent is for the blog to be fun as well as informative with lots of pictures and stories as well as tips on archival and records management topics. I began the blog at our diocesan convention in October 2011. There are 11 blog posts to date and I plan to post weekly. Take a look and let me know what you think. Though geared to the Diocese of Olympia, many of the topics have wider interest and I'd welcome any suggestions or requests.

If you have a blog for your archives, [I'd enjoy hearing about it](#). If you are thinking about starting one, I'd encourage you to begin. It's a lot of fun – and it's a great way to let folks know who we are, what we do, and why we do it!

Christ Church Adds to its Online Database of Records

By Carol Smith, Christ Church, Philadelphia

In 2005 Christ Church and the Christ Church Preservation Trust made the decision to create a digital archives website and include as part of that project an on-line database of baptismal, marriage and burial records. Over the years thanks to the generosity of funders and volunteer transcribers, more than 28,000 baptismal and marriage records were posted on-line. Within the last few weeks another 13,200 burial records have been added covering the years from 1709-1808 bringing the total number of entries to more than 40,000. These records can be accessed through the Christ Church website: www.christchurchphila.org by clicking on the tab in the upper right corner: family records/genealogy search.



Genealogists have long sought these records. In the 1880s the Pennsylvania state archives published a listing of marriages at Christ Church. Indexes to the records had been compiled by WPA workers in the 1930s and copies were kept at Christ Church and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. In the 1950s the Mormons microfilmed the baptismal, marriage and burial records as part of their efforts to collect genealogical data. In 1980 the Church's

archives were processed and microfilmed as a joint project undertaken by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and Christ Church and funded by the NHPRC. A guide to the microfilm was published and copies exist at HSP and other major research centers in addition to being housed at Christ Church.

New museum exhibition to link American artist's paintings and young pope's writings on the Passion

By Peter Sonski, Knights of Columbus

William Congdon is widely regarded as one of the most significant and influential painters of his generation. He was an American Action painter whose expressive images of urban landscapes and religious themes caught the attention of critics and fellow artists alike who praised the intensity of his vision and his unique form of abstraction. For Congdon (1912-1998), painting was a form of theology and an activity through which a particular kind of devotion could be enacted.

Working in a cold-water studio on the Bowery, Congdon used spatulas to load his panels with richly colored impasto, into which he incised delicate lines that coalesce to form portraits of urban desolation, indefinite rural landscapes, or the crucified body of Christ. A direct encounter with Congdon's paintings reveals that they are evidence of a profound spiritual journey, a struggle whose tensions somehow persist in the complicated and beautiful pictures he made. His first show, at the Betty Parsons Gallery in 1949, sold out. In 1951, he was profiled in *Life* magazine. Although Congdon's work is represented in many U.S. collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, his work is rarely exhibited in the United States.

To mark the centennial of Congdon's birth, the Knights of Columbus Museum highlights Congdon's artistic legacy by featuring 50 of his most renowned paintings from private collections and museums in Italy, Great Britain and the United States together with five meditations on Holy Week by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI. The juxtaposition of Congdon's pictures and Ratzinger's text creates a unique context that uses Ratzinger's thoughts on the Sabbath as a framework with which to better understand the tensions that compelled Congdon's artistic life.

The Sabbath of History will provide a comprehensive view of Congdon's oeuvre and offer the American public a unique opportunity to rediscover the extraordinary works that the artist created over the course of his prolific career.

William Congdon was born in Providence, R.I., and received a bachelor's degree at Yale University in 1934. In 1942, Congdon volunteered for ambulance duty with the American Field Service and in 1945 he was one of the first Americans to participate in the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. At the end of the war, Congdon moved to New York, where he exhibited at the Betty Parsons Gallery and met the major protagonists of the Abstract Expressionist movement. In the 1950s he left New York to live in Europe and in 1959 he converted to Catholicism. He continued to exhibit with Parsons until 1967, had one-person shows at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston and the Phillips Collection in Washington D.C., and was included in numerous museum surveys of contemporary American art. In 1964, he attended the Eucharistic Congress in Bombay, India, traveling from Rome with Pope Paul VI.

In 1979, after his relocation to the outskirts of Milan, Congdon's pictorial language underwent a profound transformation. In the lowlands of Lombardy his paintings became increasingly abstract in their depictions of the surrounding landscape, at times coming close to monochrome painting. Congdon died on his 86th birthday, April 15, 1998, in a hospital in Milan, Italy.

Organized by the Knights of Columbus Museum and the William G. Congdon Foundation (Milan), The Sabbath of History opens February 22, 2012. The exhibition is co-curated by Rodolfo Balzarotti, the foundation's research director, and independent curator and writer Daniel Mason.

For more information, visit kofcmuseum.org.

ARCS Web Editor's Note

Mark J. Duffy, Director of Archives, The Archives of the Episcopal Church

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