
HISTORY OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS

NEWS AND NOTES

Volume 4 Number 3
October 1991

CONFERENCE NEWS

The second conference on the history of women religious will convene June 28 to July 1, 1992, at Marymount College in Tarrytown, New York. Anyone desiring to present a paper at the Conference, the theme of which is "Women Religious and the Social Fabric," should send a one-page abstract, accompanied by a brief vita, by January 10, 1992, to the newsletter address. Further details are given on the Call for Papers, a copy of which will reach you with this edition of News and Notes. Mary Ewens, OP, has agreed to chair the Program Committee which will be screening proposals. The screening process is scheduled to conclude in February, following which newsletter subscribers and all other inquirers can expect to receive a Conference program and registration information.

Our subscriber list for News and Notes has just topped 400. New subscribers, and perhaps some who joined after February, 1988, may be interested in obtaining a complete set of back issues. If so, please send your request, along with \$5.00 to cover costs, to the Editor.

MEMBER NEWS

We were shocked and saddened to learn of the death of Annabelle Melville on May 17. Heart-related problems caused her sudden death. Annabelle's address at the first conference on the history of women religious held in St. Paul in 1989 on "Writing the Biography of a Saint" alternately inspired, challenged, and amused us. It was at once a scholarly and

deeply personal talk, graced with reminiscences about her beginnings in the intellectual life and the unfolding of her scholarly career as she grew to know the subjects whose biographer she became, most notably, Elizabeth Ann Seton and Louis William V. DuBourg. Annabelle, we will miss you.

Elizabeth Jean DeMuth, RSM, former archivist for the Sisters of Mercy in St. Louis and a member of the HWR Conference from its inception, died November 14, 1990. Elizabeth was a regular correspondent with a keen interest in the history of women's congregations. She, also, will be sorely missed.

PUBLICATIONS, TALKS

The history of health care in Canada is being illuminated by accounts concerning a trio of hospitals in the province of Ontario: *TO SERVE WITH HONOR* by Peggy Savage is a history of St. Joseph Hospital, Hamilton, from 1890 to 1990; the Peterborough St. Joseph Hospital is commemorated in a centenary account by Margaret McDonald, CSJ; and a history of St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto is forthcoming, by Irene McDonald, CSJ, to mark that hospital's centenary. Further information on these publications can be obtained from Mary Jane Trimble, CSJ, 3377 Bayview Ave., Willowdale, Ont. Canada M2M 3S4.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICAN CATHOLIC SISTERS by Lora Ann Quiñonez, CDP and Mary Daniel Turner, SNDdeN, is scheduled for publication December, 1991, by Temple University Press. The book, which uses the archival holdings of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and oral history as major sources, discusses the change process in U.S. religious communities (apostolic) of women.

SISTERS OF MERCY; SPIRITUALITY IN AMERICA (1843-1900) by Kathleen Healy, RSM, is a collection of writings derived chiefly from the archives of Sisters of Mercy throughout the U.S. representative of the development of their spirituality during the second half of the nineteenth century. Copies may be obtained by writing the author at 3333 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

This publication coincides with the culmination of a ten-year process whereby 25 regional communities of Sisters of Mercy united as one institute (July, 1991), forming one of the largest religious congregations in the world. The 7,400 Mercy Sisters from 29 countries and 45 of the 50 states were linked in a ceremony in Buffalo, NY during which 3,000 women representing the various communities signed a document as co-founders of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. The congregation's founder, Catherine McAuley, established the first House of Mercy in 1828 in Dublin. By the early twentieth century individual congregations or units flourished throughout the United States; the limited resources of some units led them to unite as the Sisters of Mercy of the Union while others remained independent. In 1965 the Federation of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas formed to share ideas and offer mutual support on a regular basis. From this, through intensive work over the past decade, there emerged a common constitution for the newly formed institute.

MORE THAN BRICKS AND MORTAR by Rita Margaret Chambers, OP, is the story of the ten-year struggle of the Caldwell Dominicans to build senior citizen housing and the experiences of the housing's initial years of occupancy. For more information, contact Irene Marie Richards, OP, Mt. St. Dominic, 1 Ryerson Ave., Caldwell, NJ 07006.

"MOTHER AUSTIN CARROLL AND MERCY WORKS ACROSS THE SOUTH" a paper delivered by Mary Hermenia Muldrey, RSM, at the American Catholic Historical Association's Spring, 1991 meeting, traces the establishment of schools for blacks in the 1860's through the end of the century by the Sisters of Mercy.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Ten Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters from Monroe, Michigan, have now formed a "Claiming Our Roots" task force to explore their history (see HWR News and Notes 4:2, p.3). Following a year's work defining their purpose, refining assumptions, and selecting topics, and with the help of a weekend consultation with Margaret (Peg) Thompson, the group is now inviting other IHMs to join them in writing a series of essays. It is hoped that the topical essays will enhance rather than replace a comprehensive history; topics include the foundation period; personal relationships and friendships; education and ministry; leadership, governance and power; the congregation as an economic entity; spirituality; health; community socialization processes; and the arts. The plan is to produce a volume in time for the Monroe IHM 1995 sesquicentennial.

Maxine Seller (SUNY Buffalo) is editing a reference work for Greenwood Press entitled **WOMEN EDUCATORS IN THE UNITED STATES: A BIOGRAPHICAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL HANDBOOK**. Seller is looking for scholars to contribute short biographies of immigrant and ethnic women educators who had an impact on American education in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. Authors of biographies of Asian American, Mexican American, and Puerto Rican educators and of Catholic and Jewish educators, as well as suggestions for subjects in these areas are especially welcome and can be sent to the editor at the Department of Educational Organization, Admin., and Policy, SUNY at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY 14260.

Jossey-Bass will be publishing an **ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WOMEN AT WORK**. The section containing entries on Catholic women religious is still being developed; other sections include Protestant religious women, women in law, women in medicine, etc. Further information can be obtained from Beth Penn, Thomas More College, Thomas More Parkway, Crestview Hills, KY 41017.

The canonization process recently initiated for Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange, founder of the Congregation of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, can be expected to generate biographical studies. An immigrant from Cuba to Maryland in the early 1800's, Lange sensed the need for education of the children of fellow immigrants. Being a Black woman in a slave state where to educate slaves was against the law did not deter her. By 1829 she had formed the first congregation of African-American women religious in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, for the purpose of educating Black children. Further information on Mother Lange and the canonization process can be obtained from the Congregation of The Oblate Sisters of Providence at 701 Gun Road, Baltimore, MD 21227.

Members of the faculty at the Institute of Notre Dame, Baltimore, the earliest permanent foundation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in North America (1847), are planning to write a history of this institution, today an inner city high school for girls. The target date for publication is 1997, the sesquicentennial year.

One of our members, Jo Ann McNamara, suggests that as members develop papers and panels for submission to the various professional association program committees, they consider submission under the auspices of the History of Women Religious Conference. When associations accept panels organized by a learned society (like the Haskins Society) they give credit in the program. This simple device could give us more presence in the profession. If interested, you

should communicate with the HWR News and Notes editor.

BOOK REVIEW

CREATING A FUTURE FOR RELIGIOUS LIFE: A Sociological Perspective, by Patricia Wittberg, SC (New York: Paulist Press, 1991). 185 pages.

Sister Patricia Wittberg, concerned about declining membership in religious congregations, has taken from sociology the rich analytic literature about the social structure of communities, associations and bureaucracies, three classic forms of group structure, and applied it systematically to the study of intra- and inter- group interaction in religious congregations of Catholic women. On the basis of her findings, she has then made predictions about which type congregation may overcome the current crisis of membership decline and look forward to a viable future.

Anyone interested in understanding group structure will find her treatment of intentional communities, of associations characterized by weak ties, and of bureaucracies organized for efficiency and effectiveness, worthwhile and informative. Her analysis of the three group models comes to life as scaffolding beneath the cherished customs and experimental new modes of living adopted or drifted into during the period of renewal since the Council. It is, as she claims, pure sociological analysis, and it is well done.

When it comes to the question of social structure, however, these models alone are not helpful unless a group is doing nothing about renewal of its commitment to the mission of the Church as expressed in its teachings about social justice, love and peace. This needs some explanation. Social structure consists of the rules and regulations adopted over the years to carry out the mission as understood by the members. Groups begin with no structure, just good will, and then, as so well described in this book, develop forms of

interaction that in time become sacralized in themselves, often to the point of obscuring the very reason for being of the congregation. Some rules are adopted to keep the charism in place; others, to implement it through ministries, and still others to manage effectively the whole growing system. Sometimes these pragmatic norms become so sacred we forget our reason for being. When the recommitment to being for mission occurs, that is, if it does, then the process of restructuring, inspired by the recommitment to the mission of the Church, plays a major role in the reform of the organization.

In our day, given our knowledge of social structures, it would indeed be unwise simply to tinker with the norms and expect that the values we would live for, die for and pass on to the next generation will appear or reappear on their own. Reading this book will help in understanding the function of the forms the institutions have taken. But, beyond such an understanding, commitment in faith to the mission of the Church continues to be required of congregational members in order to inspire the newly growing ethnic populations of the world to "come and see" how members are living that broader Church mission according to the charism of any given religious congregation.

Marie Augusta Neal
SND de Namur
Emmanuel College, Boston

ACTIVITIES AND EXHIBITS

The Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mount Carmel, Dubuque, Iowa are celebrating the centennial of their motherhouse with a series of tours of their Heritage Rooms and an historical event each month from September, 1991 through July, 1992. The roots of the BVMs are in Dublin in 1829; they immigrated to Philadelphia where they lived from 1833 to 1843 when they traveled to Dubuque, eventually establishing a motherhouse at the present Mount Carmel site on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River.

Facilitated by the railroad system which radiated out from Chicago this congregation achieved an unusual dispersion throughout the United States under a central government. Persons interested in more information about the BVMs and their coming centenary events should contact Jane McDonald, BVM, Mount Carmel BVM Center, 1100 Carmel Drive, Dubuque, IA 52004.

The Sisters of St. Francis of Millvale, Pennsylvania are just bringing to a close a year-long celebration of the 125th anniversary of their foundation in the United States. For more information contact M. Thomasita Heller, OSF, Archivist, St. Francis Convent, Mt. Alvernia, Millvale P.O., Pittsburgh, PA 15209.

1993 BERKSHIRE CONFERENCE ON
THE HISTORY OF WOMEN: Call for
Papers

The 9th Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, "Transformations: Women, Gender, Power," will be held on June 11-13, 1993 at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, NY, USA. The Program Committee welcomes proposals addressing the relations between feminist history and social and political practice and papers taking an interdisciplinary or comparative approach crossing national, cultural, racial, or ethnic lines. The Conference encourages international participation and perspectives.

We prefer submissions of proposals for complete panels (to include a maximum of two papers, one commentator, and a moderator) or roundtables. Individual papers will also be considered. The Program Committee may rearrange panels; submissions of a proposal will be taken as agreement with this proviso.

Please submit proposals in triplicate by February 1, 1992, and include: panel title, title and one-page abstract of each paper (or roundtable theme); and one-page vita for each participant, including current address and telephone number. Enclose a stamped self-addressed postcard for return on receipt of packet.

Send proposals on U.S. topics to: Elaine Abelson, New School for Social Research, Eugene Lang College, 65 West 11th Street, New York, NY 10011; on other than U.S. topics to: Margaret Hunt, Amherst College, 2254, P.O. Box 5000, Amherst, MA 01002-5000; comparative U.S./ non-U.S. topics may be sent to either Program Committee Co-Chair. Please direct all correspondence to "Attn: Berkshire Conference".

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Please have copy for the February issue to the editor by January 1, 1992.

THE HWR NEWSLETTER

Published by the Conference on History of Women Religious, 12001 Chalon Road, Los Angeles, CA 90049. ISSN: 1054-545X

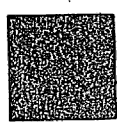
Annual Subscription: \$5.00
Editor: Karen M. Kennelly, CSJ

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CONFERENCE ON WOMEN RELIGIOUS AND THE SOCIAL FABRIC June 28 - July 1, 1992

The History of Women Religious Network
is sponsoring a Conference on Women Religious and the Social Fabric
at Marymount College, Tarrytown, New York,
Sunday, June 28 through Wednesday morning, July 1, 1991.



Plenary and concurrent sessions are planned to allow time for participants to share particular research interests as well as to explore and plan together regarding desirable future directions in this field.

CALL FOR PAPERS A limited number of papers illustrative of contemporary research and use of sources unique to the field will be accepted for presentation at the two concurrent sessions; shorter papers describing research in progress will also be accepted for presentation at panel and magnet group sessions.

Persons desiring the next circular with program and registration information should send their name and address to the Conference address as given below.

Persons who wish to present papers of either type should send their proposal in the form of a one-page abstract, accompanied by a one-page vita, by January 10, 1992, to the same address:

CONFERENCE ON WOMEN RELIGIOUS AND THE SOCIAL FABRIC
12001 Chalon Road
Los Angeles, CA 90049

PLEASE POST