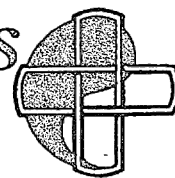


History of Women Religious News and Notes



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HWR Network News

Planning is in progress for the Sixth Triennial Conference, June 27—30, 2004, at the Atchison Heritage Conference Center in Atchison, Kansas. Please direct any questions you may have at this early stage to Program Chair, Carol Coburn (coburnck@mail.avila.edu); or to Judith Sutura, OSB, Local Arrangements Chair (jsutura@benedictine.edu). Conference coordinators would appreciate your suggestions and ideas as they set the conference theme and format. Elizabeth Kolmer, Award Committee Chair (kolmere@SLU.EDU), would welcome early nominations for or questions concerning criteria for the Distinguished Historian Award and the Distinguished Book Award.

Publications

Sarah Foot's two-volume study of Anglo-Saxon religious women, *The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England; and Female Religious Communities in England, 871-1066* (Ashgate Press, Burlington, Vermont, 2000), analyzes the women's historiographic "disappearance" beginning in the ninth century (vol. I), and provides a repertory of women's religious congregations of the era (vol. II).

Joan Mueller, *Clare's Letters to Agnes: Texts and Sources* (Franciscan Institute, New York, 2001), assesses the sources and analyzes the content of Clare's letters to Agnes of Prague, concluding with the Latin text and an English translation.

Edith A. Van den Goorbergh, OSC, and Theodore H. Zweerman, OFM, *Light Shining Through a Veil: On Saint Clare's Letters to Saint Agnes of Prague* (English translation of 1994 Dutch text, by Aline Looman-Graaskamp and Frances Teresa, OCS; Peeters, Leuven, 2000), is regarded as the most comprehensive analysis to date of the letters.

The second volume of *Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Collected Writings*, co-edited by Regina Bechtle, SC, and Judith Metz, SC, with Ellin M. Kelly as manuscript editor, is due off the press this fall (New York City Press). This volume covers Seton's correspondence and journals 1808-1821, the period when she founded the Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Suellen Hoy, "No Color Line at Loretto Academy: Catholic Sisters and African Americans on Chicago's South Side," *Journal of Women's History*, Spring, 2002, pp. 8-33, continues her study of the work of women's congregations with African Americans in Chicago.

Barbra Mann Wall, "'We Might as Well Burn It': Catholic Sister-Nurses and Hospital Control, 1865-1930," *U.S. Catholic Historian*, Winter, 2002, pp. 21-39, explores the work of sisters from four congregations in establishing and operating hospitals in the late nineteenth century: Sisters of the Holy Cross from Notre Dame, Indiana; Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet from St. Paul, Minnesota; Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word from San Antonio, Texas; and Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration from Lafayette, Indiana.

Deirdre M. Maloney, "Divisions of Labor: The Roles of American Catholic Lay Women, Lay Men, and Women Religious in Charity Provision," *U.S. Catholic Historian*, Winter, 2002, pp. 41-55, illustrates the distinctiveness of American Catholic approaches to charitable work in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

HWR members Elizabeth McGahan, "Education and the Sisters of Charity: Sectarianism, Ethnicity and Gender," Elizabeth Smyth, "Wisdom Raises Her Voice: Oral Histories of Women Religious in English Canada," and Barbara Walsh, "The Business of Running Convents: Enterprising 19th

Century;" presented aspects of their work on women religious at a recent conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the general theme of "Women's History: Irish/Canadian Connections." Other papers of direct relevance for the history of women religious were Yvonne McKenna's "Irish Women Religious and the Subjectivities of the Self;" and Deirdre McMahon's "The Arrival of the Mercy Order in Canada in the 1840s."

Note: orders for Patricia J. Manion, *Beyond the Adobe Wall* (see bibliographic note in News and Notes June, 2002) should be directed to Manion at P.O. Box 32491, Santa Fe, NM 87594; \$15 covers postage and handling.

Research in Progress

Carol Coburn who just completed a biographical essay on Annette Walters, CSJ, for the forthcoming *Notable American Women* (Vol. 5, publication expected in 2003-2004, Harvard University Press), is working on a longer piece on Walters as a future journal article submission. Additionally, she has been interviewing Sisters of St. Joseph participants in the 1965 Selma marches, an important part of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s.

Constance Gaynor, FSP, writes that she will soon begin the writing phase for a history of the Franciscan Sisters of Peace. She can be reached by those interested in assisting or in getting more information on the project at 2259 Loring Place No., Bronx, NY 10468.

Patricia Lynch, SBS, is currently at Xavier University of New Orleans engaged in research preparatory to writing the history of the University.

Regina Siegfried, ASC, has been asked by her congregation, the Adorers of the Precious Blood, to write the history of its mission in China, 1933-1945, concerning which "tons of material" exist in their archives. We heard recently, also, from Mary Roger Madden, SP, who would appreciate assistance from any religious congregations of women who have missions in Asia, especially if they have houses of formation in Taiwan or other nations of oriental culture. She is undertaking a study of the Sisters of Providence mission in Taiwan.

Dolores Liptak, RSM, is doing research for the Detroit Province of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, specifically, on the decision of ten Sisters of Mercy of the Union to become a new congregation, the Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma, Michigan. The separation took place in 1973.

Book Reviews

No Cross, No Crown: Black Nuns in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans by Sister Mary Bernard Deggs. Eds. Virginia Meacham Gould and Charles E. Nolan (Indiana University Press, 2001). Pp. xxxvi + 226.

Sister Mary Bernard Deggs' journal chronicles the nineteenth-century experience of the Sisters of the Holy Family, the second Roman Catholic sisterhood of African descent in the United States. The paucity of historical records documenting the sisterhood's tortuous evolution from a religious confraternity in 1842 to a community of women religious, whose rule and habit the Catholic Church formally approved in the 1880s, underscores the historical significance of Deggs' journal, begun in 1894. Deggs' insights about communal spirituality and devotional piety, her revealing accounts of personality conflicts and communal tensions, and her reflections on the sisterhood's ministry more than compensate for her lack of literary skills.

The journal consists of five parts, covering the administration of co-founders Mothers Henriette Delille and Juliette Gaudin, Mother Josephine Charles, Mother Marie Magdalene Alpaugh, Mother Marie Cecilia Capla, and Mother Mary Austin Jones. Editors Virginia Gould and Charles Nolan introduce each part with chronologies and commentaries.

Inexplicably, the editors contradict their own evidence of the "attitudes of race, status, and condition represented in this journal and elsewhere in the archives of the Sisters of the Holy Family" (7) by arguing unconvincingly that from their inception the Sisters identified racially with the black slave and free people they evangelized. However, self characterizations like "young quadroon and octoroon ladies" (10), slave ownership, and explicitly stated preferences for and admiration of light skin

color suggest that the nineteenth-century Sisters considered the black population "our people" primarily as the recipients of their ministry.

The editors further contend that "conventions of class, race, gender, and condition held implications for free women of color in New Orleans as they did nowhere else in the deep South," and go on to argue that "it was only there, in the 1840s and 1850s, when the slave-based social system was at its most restrictive, that a band of women of African descent could turn their spiritual energy and hope into the reality of an officially recognized religious community, committed to serve the religious and social needs of their people." (xx)

This assertion completely ignores the experience of the first black Catholic sisterhood, the Oblate Sisters of Providence, in Baltimore in the 1820s. Comparing various aspects of the histories of these two antebellum southern black Catholic sisterhoods would have proven instructive. Nevertheless, Gould's and Nolan's efforts to surmount the considerable obstacles they encountered in editing Deggs' journal prove well expended. As they correctly assert, "the complexity of this document, the way in which it intertwines issues of race, class, and gender against the backdrop of economic, political, and social change, should make it a godsend to scholars in many fields." (xx)

Diane Batts Morrow
The University of Georgia

One Woman's Journey: Mary Potter Founder—Little Company of Mary, by Elizabeth A. West, LCM (Spectrum Publications, 2000). Pp. xvii + 264.

In *One Woman's Journey* Elizabeth West, LCM, examines the life of Mary Potter and the foundation and development of the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary. West illuminates nineteenth-century English Catholicism and the development of communities of women religious in the second half of the century following the Catholic revival.

The two-fold purpose of the author is to locate Potter within the changing Victorian society of her time and a Catholic theological context, as well as to recount her life from childhood to death. Clearly,

Potter was a product of her society and her faith. The first two sections, "The Early Years" and "Transitions" provide insight into Potter's formation and physical and spiritual growth. West draws from the subject's private journals, letters, and memoirs and from other family recollections to explore the familial and societal influences that shaped Potter's spiritual life and attracted her to a religious vocation and the founding of the new congregation.

The final sections, "Foundation" and "Expansion and Consolidation," describe the struggles of forming this new community and its history up to the end of Potter's life. Integral to this story is the understanding of Mary Potter's place within Victorian society and the British Catholic Church. By living as a woman religious, she stepped outside the domestic sphere of the time. West also shows that Potter's spiritual life as a mystic challenged the existing male authority within the Church as well as societal stereotypes of women.

In *One Woman's Journey*, West portrays Potter as an unlikely agitator for change, skillfully depicting Mary's struggle to be faithful to her family, her spiritual advisors, and local bishop, while yet being devoted to her calling. As a young woman, her fervent devotion and developing spirituality concerned her family. When she sought to enter a contemplative community such as the Carmelites, she was induced instead to enter the Sisters of Mercy. Although sustained by this community's spiritual life, the Sisters of Mercy did not fit Mary Potter's vocation; she returned to her family and continued to search for her spiritual destiny. Her emerging vision of a community rooted in contemplative prayer but including elements of an active sisterhood chafed against the desires of a local bishop.

Ultimately, she founded the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary, but her fight continued as she strove to maintain the congregation's autonomy, eventually seeking papal approbation to preserve her authority over against the bishop's assertions. The strength of West's work lies in her making Mary Potter visible as a member of a group of British foundresses of the period, but also and more importantly, in drawing together key elements of gender and religion to expand our understanding of

the larger Victorian society.

Mary Beth Fraser
The Catholic University of America

Archives

The Women Religious Special Collection at Avila University continues to receive books and materials from various sources. At present it includes over 2000 books, more than 1200 manuscripts, HWR News and Notes from 1989 to 2000, other periodicals and various fugitive materials. Recent donors include Sisters of Providence, Sisters of Charity, Sisters of St. Joseph-Carondelet, and several individuals including Regina Bechtle, Suellen Hoy, and Daniel Cherico. There are space limitations, so archivist Martha Smith, CSJ (smithm@mindspring.com) would be grateful if donors would send lists of books in advance of intended donation so duplication can be avoided.

Valerie Gerrard Browne, director of the Women and Leadership Archives at the Gannon Center for Women and Leadership, Loyola University Chicago, reports that the Women's Archives Mapping Project Directory will soon appear on the WLA web site (www.luc.edu/orgs/gannon). The Directory will feature archives in the U.S. that contain significant holdings pertaining to women.

Catherine Ann Curry, PBVM, has retired from the Archives of the Archdiocese of San Francisco but continues research and writing, most recently composing several entries for the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of American Catholic Women*. Her congregation, the San Francisco Sisters of the Presentation, has as its sesquicentennial goals (2004) to prepare for publication a collection of biographies of the sisters and the unpublished manuscript, "With Hearts of Oak," a history from 1854-1906 by the late M. Rose Forest, PBVM.

Mary Hermenia Muldrey, RSM, is a volunteer archivist for Our Lady of Wisdom Center in New Orleans. In her 70th year as a Sister of Mercy, she writes that although she's no longer able to go to meetings, she "likes seeing how much others are doing," and that she appreciates having office space where she can work on the numerous Mercy history

files she brought with her to the Center. She recollects having had a year to do research in European archives for her monumental biography of Mother Austin Carroll, RSM, preceding which she gave ten years of Saturdays and holidays to research in archives throughout the U.S.

Announcements

The next triennial conference of the Archivists of Catholic Women Religious will convene in St. Louis Sept. 25-28, 2003. Contact their national office for more information (acwr@juno.com or 202-884-9441).

The American Historical Association and the American Catholic Historical Association will hold their annual meetings concurrently in Chicago Jan. 2-6, 2003. For more information see the AHA web site (www.theaha.org).

The deadline for proposal submission for the spring meeting of the American Catholic Historical Association, to be held this year at the University of Scranton Mar. 28-29, 2003, is October 1, 2002. Please submit individual or panel proposals to Prof. Roy Domenico, University of Scranton, Scranton, PA 18510; or by email (domenicor2@uofs.edu).

The Episcopal Women's History Project offers research and travel grants to support research and publication about the lives and work of women throughout the history of the Episcopal Church. For information and application forms (deadline Dec. 1, 2002), contact Dr. Jane Harris at Hendrix College, 1600 Washington Ave., Conway, AR 72032; or by email (harris@mercury.hendrix.edu).

The Western Association of Women Historians welcomes proposals for panels or single papers (deadline February 1, 2003) for its annual conference to be held this year at the University of California, Berkeley. For more information contact Barbara Loomis, San Francisco State Univ., 1600 Holloway Ave., San Francisco, CA 94132, or email (barbaral@sfsu.edu).

The Ursuline Sisters of New Orleans were re-

cently honored at the joint meeting in Chicago of the Catholic Health Association and Catholic Charities USA, in recognition of the Ursulines' arrival in New Orleans 275 years ago and their establishment of the first Catholic health and social ministries in what became part of territorial U.S.

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2401 Karen M. Kennelly, CSJ, Editor

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