

# HISTORY OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS

Volume 1 Number 1 February 1988

## NEWS AND NOTES

### Network, U.S. Women Religious Research

With this first issue of History of Women Religious: News and Notes, we put flesh on an idea born at a colloquium on "The History of Women Religious in the United States," held October 2, 1987, at Cushwa Center, Notre Dame. Those of you who attended the colloquium, or who subsequently asked to be put on the mailing list for the newsletter, constitute the membership of a newly formed network of persons interested in the history of women religious.

The sole purpose of the network is to facilitate and promote communication concerning the topic, to publicize activities of the membership with regard to the history of women religious in this country, and to stimulate one another to bring research on women religious into the mainstream of contemporary historical studies.

The newsletter is one means of facilitating exchange of information. We encourage you to use its pages to share your ideas, and to be inventive in seeking out other means of collaborating such as personal correspondence and arranging for contact at meetings of those professional organizations in which you are active. The mailing list enclosed with this issue of the newsletter is intended to assist you in that process.

### Colloquium

Thirty-two invited panelists and participants attended the October 2 colloquium which was hosted by the Cushwa Center and subsidized by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. Jay Dolan relates that "the history of this initiative goes back to November of 1980 when I first contacted Sister Clare Fitzgerald who at that time was the newly elected president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. I wrote to her and suggested that the Cushwa Center would like to work together with the LCWR to promote a project on writing the history of women religious in the United States. The response of Clare Fitzgerald was very positive and she said she would bring it to the attention of the executive board of the LCWR. There was some correspondence between Sister Laura Ann Quinonez (LCWR Executive Director at the time) and myself and then Sister Evangelina Thomas was appointed as liaison person between the Cushwa Center and the LCWR. This took place in 1981.

"After some conversations with Sister Evangelina Thomas we decided to have a brainstorming session at Notre Dame in the fall of 1981 to discuss the project. Sister Karen Kennelly was one of the individuals involved in this meeting along with Sister Joan deLourdes Leonard, CSJ, Sister Barbara Misner, SCSC, Wendy Schlereth of the University of Notre Dame Archives, Philip Gleason and myself from the University of Notre Dame and Sister Evangelina Thomas."

"At the meeting no long range plans were developed. It was decided to focus on the conference in 1982 which the Cushwa Center was sponsoring. The intention was to surface as much attention as possible at that conference on the history of women religious in the United States. The conference took place in the fall of 1982 and was quite successful. Many sessions in the conference focused on the history of women religious in the United States. Not much happened since 1982 in this area. Neither the Cushwa Center nor the LCWR took much initiative after the conference of 1982. Then in 1987 the Lilly Endowment through Sister Jeanne Knoerle raised the issue once again and at that time it was decided to organize the symposium with funding from the Lilly Endowment. The rest is history."

Jay adds that he looks to our committee, that is, to the group of seven which got together at the colloquium to plan next steps, for "some solid progress in the months and years ahead." Jay not only bequeathes this responsibility to us, but also helped arrange for grant funds not expended for the recent colloquium (\$1,500) to go toward our direct expenses as we edit the newsletter and get the new network underway. The ad hoc committee consists of Barbara Misner, SCSC; Mary Ewens, OP; Barbara Brumleve, SSND; Mary Cates, CSJ; Peg Thompson; Kaye Asha, OP; Kitty Kish-Sklar; and Karen Kennelly, CSJ, who agreed to be contact person and to initiate the newsletter.

Our thanks go to Jay for his repeated expressions of interest and support, and for planning so stimulating and provocative a gathering last October. Thanks are also in order to the Lilly Endowment and Jeanne Knoerle for her help.

## News and Notes

Mary Oates, CSJ, has an article due to come out soon, "Lowell: An Account of Convent Life in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1852-1898," to appear in The New England Quarterly vol. 61, March, 1988.

Mary, who teaches in the Department of Economics, Regis College, is just winding up an editorial project of considerable interest for the history of women religious: Garland Press brought out a few months ago a volume edited by

Mary entitled Higher Education for Catholic Women: An Historical Anthology. 544 pp. and selling for \$88, this collection of articles, reports, and essays on the evolution of Catholic higher education for women illuminates a phase of women's religious communities unique to the United States. The anthologized pieces, many of which are very difficult to obtain today, reflect persisting differences in philosophies, faculties, curricula, student bodies, and social environments within the numerous women's colleges founded by religious communities after 1888. These, in turn, help explain why a majority of the colleges remained small, local, and vocationally-oriented, while a significant minority developed into nationally recognized liberal arts colleges. The cost of the volume may make private acquisition prohibitive for some of us, but do urge your libraries and archives to acquire and give yourself a rare reading treat.

Mary Denis Maher, CSA, is completing doctoral studies at Case Western Reserve University, in American Studies with emphasis on Nineteenth Century Women's Studies. Her dissertation, "To Do With Honor: The Roman Catholic Sister Nurse in the United States Civil War," makes extensive use of archival materials to focus on the contribution of the approximately 688 Sisters of 21 different communities who nursed Union and Confederate soldiers during the Civil War.

Barbara Misner, SCSC, tells us that her thesis, on the first seven congregations of women religious to be established in eighteenth and early nineteenth century United States (Highly Respectable and Accomplished Women Religious, 1798-1850, 1988,) is soon to be published by Garland Press. The timing is excellent as the Carmelites of Port Tobago, Maryland, the first of these communities, will celebrate their bicentennial in 1998.

Dolores Liptak, RSM, and Sister M. Ursula, CSA, are in the process of editing contributions by various authors to a comprehensive history of health care developments, tentatively named Contribution of Religious Congregations in Health in the United States 1880-1986. The edited manuscript is to go to the publisher in March. We'll pass on more information as available. A complimentary copy of the book is promised to anyone who can come up with a brief (3-5 word), attractive title!

Janice Edwards, in asking to be placed on our newsletter mailing list, makes this request of our network members: "Do you know anyone I could contact about the best places to study the history of women religious?" You'll find Janice's address on the mailing list which is included with this issue. Do write her with your suggestions and observations.

George Craig Stewart, Jr. is initiating data collection for a popular history of American women religious. If your community did not receive a prospectus and questionnaire from him, or if you'd just like more information on what he is doing, let him know.

## ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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## Newsletter Deadline

The newsletter is published quarterly.  
Please have copy for the June issue to  
the editor by May 15.