

Today and Yesterday

Stories from the Archives



The 175th exhibit: 5 things to know

An exhibit that explores 10 segments of IHM history is open now in the Motherhouse Gallery.

The photos, art, artifacts, and audio and visual recordings are all part of the IHM Archives. The display is titled, “For the Good of Souls: The Gifts of the IHM Sisters.”

IHM Archivist Jennifer Meacham: “Our goal was to highlight a variety of topics that paint a picture of IHM history, including many of the accomplishments, the hardships and the joys of IHM sisterhood.”

Sisters living in the Motherhouse have until Nov. 14 to visit and re-visit the display. Here is a little background on five not-to-be-missed things:

#1: Audio recordings

Two stations include a rare opportunity to hear the voices again of beloved IHMs, Mother Teresa McGivney and Sister

Miriam Raymo. Mother Teresa can be heard taking questions from novices about overseas missions and why she chose to start with Puerto Rico.

Sister Miriam recalls the 1929 fire that destroyed the second St. Mary Academy. Long, narrow handsets can be lifted to the ear and the recordings start automatically.

#2: The corn sheller

Two years ago a vintage piece of farm equipment was discovered in the Organic Garden barn by IHM employees Bill Clouse and Bill Osborne. They cleaned and restored the century-old technology and now the corn sheller really can shell corn! Ask the Archives if you’d like to see a working demonstration of this



piece of IHM history.

#3: From the Ashes: a journey

The story of the 1905 Academy, the fire and the rebuilding starts on the left with a beautiful photograph of students standing outside the building. The history continues with photos and a motion picture taken June 3, 1929. Next is the original blueprint of the current Motherhouse, followed by the story of building the chapel. This segment ends with a Sister John Louise Leahy pastel of Sisters walking down the aisle (see photo above).

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As the saying goes: ‘The rest is history’

Most IHM Sisters are well aware of the work done by Sisters Mary Emil Penet, Claudia Carlen and Joan Mumaw. Most, however, might not know the role pure surprise and serendipity played in arriving at those ministries.

Sister Mary Emil was instrumental in a nationwide Sister Formation movement during the 1950s. But Sister Mary Patrick Riley was there first, described by Sister Margaret Brennen in her book as a consummate educator, tireless and outrageously innovative. Sister Margaret wrote, “When the NCEA met in Kansas City in 1952, she was to be on a panel in the Teacher-Education section to discuss Pius XII’s Counsel to

Teaching Sisters. Unable to attend due to a death in her family, she sent in her place Sister Mary Emil Penet, IHM, a teacher of philosophy in our nascent formation college at the mother house. And, as the saying goes, “The rest is history.”

Sister Claudia Carlen’s major work was, truly, encyclopedic. But soon after she entered the IHM community in 1926, she was sent to study and as she sat in the car that would take her to school, she got a surprise. Years later, she told Oral Historian Joan Glisky this: “Sister Marie Virginia (Currie) came running up to me, she had this great big book in her hands, and I didn’t know it, but it

was the decimal classification. I’d never heard of it. And she just (plucked) it in my arms and she said, ‘Mother Domatilla said you’re going to go into library work.’ And I looked amazed. Library work? I didn’t know anything about it.”

Sister Joan Mumaw was packing a bag to leave for studies in the Spanish language with an assignment waiting in Puerto Rico. She remembers now: “Before this happened, Margaret Brennan asked if I would consider responding to a request for someone trained in cultural anthropology to go to Uganda to teach in the major seminary. She had just met the Ugandan Rector. And, yes, the rest is history. Africa has been a gift.”

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#4: Mother Theresa visages

One or two pictures of Mother Theresa Maxis are well-known. This exhibit includes a not-so-known collage of how Mother Theresa has been interpreted by artists over the years in art and sculpture.

#5: Sister Sisters

Three collages remind us of how many biological sisters became IHM Sisters, too. Dozens are represented including the Rabauts, Sullivans, Mahers, Curriers, Laubachers and more. This research has been a labor of love done by Archives Assistant Sister Diann Cousino.



#6 bonus from the Archivist:

The “Walk the Walk” display includes many great photos, including one we found by pure luck. IHM Sisters, along with tens of thousands of other citizens, are pictured at a 1920 rally to oppose a Michigan ballot measure that would have banned parochial schools. The event took place at

the Detroit Tigers' old stadium, Navin Field. The photo is in a book about the history of Tiger Stadium, a book co-written by Frank Rashid, a former Marygrove professor and a long-time colleague of Jennifer Meacham. But for that personal connection, we wouldn't have known about the photo.

A Look Back: The Sesquicentennial



More than 1,500 members of the Tri-IHM congregations met in Monroe Aug. 3-6, 1995, to celebrate the sesquicentennial of the founding, 150 years. Four days were packed with sharing, ceremony, worship and fun, all symbolic and sprinkled with gratitude. Events included a Heritage Trail visit to the site of the first convent.

— Vespers photo
by E. Booms



Top: Sisters Margaret Chapman and Mary Katherine Hamilton.
Bottom: Virginia Pfau and Adele Stommel



IHM Sisters, guests and news media assembled on the front lawn of the Motherhouse to unveil the Peace Pole.

Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

610 W. Elm Ave.
Monroe, MI 48162
www.ihmsisters.org
Follow us on Facebook
Phone: 734-240-9695

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Director: Jennifer Meacham, Archivist
jmeacham@ihmsisters.org

Editor: Deborah Saul
dsaul@ihmsisters.org



Since 2000, all IHM sisters have been encouraged to submit individual chronicles to the IHM Archives. These records about your own life and ministry over the course of a year or more add breadth and depth to the documented history of the IHM Sisters. Your contribution will enrich the future record of the IHM, so please be sure your life's story is included in the community's story.

Among Ourselves: in Canada

The IHM Leadership Council 1994-2000 was meeting at Crawfton when this photo was taken.

Back row (left to right) are Paula Cathcart, Mary McCann, Nancy Sylvester, Anne Crimmins, Fran Mlocek, and Mary Agnes Ryan.

Kneeling: Mary Ann Markel and Kate O'Brien.

