

ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD



OFFICE OF THE ARCHDIOCESAN ARCHIVES

HISTORY

General Overview: Archdiocesan Archives (1976-present)

In preparation for the 1976 United States Bicentennial celebration, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (now the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) issued: *A Document on Ecclesiastical Archives*. The 1974 document urged dioceses across the United States to establish an archives program, if one did not already exist in their own diocese. Archbishop John F. Whealon, D.D., S.S.L., S.T.L. (1921-1991; Archbp. 1968-1991) heeded the call for Hartford and an organizational committee was formed in 1975.

In October of 1975, a formal proposal plan for organizing the AOH Archives was prepared by Sr. Dolores A. Liptak, RSM, (then an assistant history professor at St. Joseph College and a doctoral candidate) and Vivian R. Stephenson (first women editor of *The Catholic Transcript*). In early 1976, Archbishop Whealon approved the proposal and the Office of the Archdiocesan Archives was officially established.

The new Archdiocesan office was located at the Chancery (Hartford, CT) and staffed by Sr. Dolores Liptak (Historian) and Vivian Stephenson (Research Technician). Other early staff included Mary A. Caffrey (Coordinator); Harriet Foley (Typist/Transcriptionist); Alice Angelo (Typist/Transcriptionist); Jay Griffith (Seminarist Assistant - summer 1976); Sr. M. Sarah, RSM (Latin Translator); and Msgr. John V. Horgan (French Translator).

The initial holdings of the Archives comprised eight file drawers of unclassified correspondence and records. A budget of \$2,500 was allocated to the Archives, which covered the cost of educational expenses, resource books, membership fees, supplies, and a small salary for Sr. Dolores.

In 1977, Sr. Dolores assumed charge of the Archives on a part-time bases. Vivian Stephenson and Janet Schmalt, a graduate of St. Joseph College (now the University of St. Joseph in West Hartford), worked as her assistants. In 1979, Archbishop Whealon appointed Sr. Dolores as Archdiocesan Historian for AOH and in 1985, following her retirement, elevated her to Emeritus Historian (to date, she continues to holds the title).

Following Sr. Dolores' retirement, Sr. Mary Jaskel, OSF (1985-1990), was appointed as the first full-time AOH Archivist. She was succeed by Sr. Theresa McQueeney, SND (1990-1994), Sr. Irene Fortier, DHS (1995-1996), and Sr. Marjorie Fallon, RSM (1996-2001). Under the tenor of these early Archivists, the AOH Archives developed its core collections and assisted with two major Archdiocesan publications: *Hartford's Catholic Legacy: Parishes* (1994) and *Hartford's Catholic Legacy: Leadership* (1999).

In 2001, the Archdiocesan administration committed to operating a professionally managed Archives and hired its first full-time professional Archivist, Maria Medina, MLS (2001-2014). Ms. Medina introduced professional archives policies and procedures and was instrumental in laying the groundwork for a Records Center. Additionally, she had proper shelving and climate control measures installed. Also, during her time of service, *Lift High the Cross: The History of the Archdiocese of Hartford* (2003) was published and joint projects with the O'Brien Library ensued.

Following Ms. Medina's departure in 2014, two consecutive interim Archivists, Stephanie Gold, MS (2014-2015) and Emily Bartram, MLS (2015-2016) were hired. In November 2016, the Chancellor closed the Archives indefinitely and suspended all services, pending its vacancy. In late September 2017, Bridgette A. Woodall, M.Div, MLIS (2017-present) was hired as the next full-time professional Archivist and limited services resumed.

In mid-2018, the AOH Archives began a long-term restructuring process to overhaul the internal operations of the Archives and bring it up to speed with current professional archival standards and "best practices." To date, a full-scale inventory of the Archives holdings has been completed; a uniform cataloging system introduced; a Records Center established and a records management program launched; the website revamped; policies and procedures updated; COVID-19 protocols enacted; a series of reference sources prepared; and additional space has been acquired for the expanding collections and operational needs. And, currently, a backlog of unprocessed material is being methodically and meticulously cataloged and properly preserved.

Additionally, the AOH Archives, in conjunction with the Office of Communications, engaged a 2018 Time Capsule Project (commemorating the 175th Archdiocesan Anniversary); assisted the Hartford Bishops' Foundation with the Cathedral's 2021 Memorial Garden dedication (providing a history for the Cathedral and the former St. Joseph Convent (RSM) signage project); and a collaborative rare book preservation project is underway with the O'Brien Library.

Today, the AOH Archives continues operations at the Chancery (Hartford, CT) under a professional Archivist who manages both the AOH Archives and its Records Center. Additionally, the Archivist maintains professional Archives memberships and engages professional development opportunities annually (representing AOH at related archival conferences, seminars, workshops, classes, etc.).

Current holdings total over 2,000 linear ft. of administrative, fiscal, legal, religious, and historical documents as well as religious/sacred artwork and objects; personal papers; and reference material. The Archives receives 200-300 project and research requests annually from the internal administration and external researchers in addition to general inquiries and reference questions.

AOH Archives services and updates are maintained on the AOH Archives webpage (located on the AOH website): <https://archdioceseofhartford.org/archdiocesan-archives/>.

TIMELINE

AOH Archives (1974-present)

1974

- November 22 *A Document on Ecclesiastical Archives* issued by National Conference of Catholic Bishops (now the USCCB)

1975

- Early 1975 Organizational committee for the Archdiocesan Archives formed by Archbishop John F. Whealon, D.D., S.S.L., S.T.L.
- October 31 Proposal plan for Archdiocesan Archives drafted and submitted by Sr. Dolores A. Liptak, RSM, and Vivian R. Stephenson

1976

- Early 1976 Proposal plan approved by Archbishop Whealon and the Office of the Archdiocesan Archives officially established
- Early 1976 Sr. Dolores A. Liptak, RSM, and Vivian R. Stephenson Staff Archives part-time as Historian and Research Technician (respectively)

1979

- September 14 Sr. Dolores appointed Archdiocesan Historian by Archbishop Whealon

1985

- Mid-year Sr. Dolores retires and is elevated to Emeritus Historian for the Archdiocese by Archbishop Whealon

1985

- September 03 Sr. Mary Jaskel, OSF, becomes first full-time Archivist

1990

- Mid-year Sr. Mary Jaskel, OSF, resigns as Archivist and is appointed Archivist for her congregation in Pittsburgh, PA.
- September 04 Sr. Theresa McQueeney, SND, becomes second full-time Archivist

1991

- August 01 Sr. Irene Fortier, DHS, appointed Assistant Archivist

- 1994**
- 1994 *Hartford's Catholic Legacy: Parishes* published
 - December Sr. Theresa McQueeney, SND, resigns as Archivist
- 1995**
- June 01 Sr. Irene Fortier, DHS, becomes Archivist (part-time)
- 1996**
- April 25 Sr. Marjorie Fallon, RSM, appointed Assistant Archivist
 - June Sr. Irene Fortier, DHS, resigns as Archivist
 - July 01 Sr. Marjorie Fallon, RSM, becomes Archivist (part-time)
- 1998**
- August Contract with offsite storage facility initiated
- 1999**
- 1999 *Hartford's Catholic Legacy: Leadership* published
- 2001**
- Mid-year Sr. Marjorie Fallon, RSM, retires as Archivist
 - July 02 Maria Medina, MLS, hired as first full-time professional Archivist
- 2003**
- 2003 *Lift High the Cross: The History of the Archdiocese of Hartford* published
- 2007**
- Mid-year HVAC system and compact shelving installed in vault
- 2014**
- February 21 Maria Medina, MLS, resigns as Archivist
 - March 24 Stephanie Gold, MS, hired as Archivist (professional, full-time)
- 2015**
- March 19 Stephanie Gold, MS, resigns as Archivist
 - September 14 Emily Bartram, MLS, hired as Archivist (professional, full-time)

2016

- November 04 Emily Bartram, MLS, resigns as Archivist
- November 05 Vacancy ensues and Archives is closed indefinitely by order of the Chancellor

2017

- September 18 Bridgette A. Woodall, M.Div, MLIS, becomes Archivist (professional, full-time)
- Late 2017 Limited service resumes

2018

- March 12 Meriline Sarkar hired as Archives Assistant (part-time)
- Mid-march Humidifying component of HAVC system replaced
- Mid-2018 Archives closed for long-term restructuring process by order of the Chancellor (limited service provided to AOH administration only; closed to external researchers)
- May 09 Collaboration with O'Brien Library begins in conjunction with library relocation project
- June 22 Collaboration with O'Brien Library suspended indefinitely following departure of Library Director
- June 29 Vault security system upgraded
- June-December Archdiocesan Records Center and Records Management Program organized (part of restructuring process); additional space acquired
- June-
November 2019 First full-scale inventory of Archives holdings conducted
- August 28 Meriline Sarkar leaves post as Archives Assistant
- November-
July 2019 Official AOH "Hold Order" issued by Chancellor (access to Archives records/materials restricted; Archives staff and resources redirected to assist with Clergy investigation)

- November 28-September 2019 AOH 175th Anniversary Celebration observed (Archives Memorabilia/Time Capsule Project launched in conjunction with Office of Communication)

2019

- January 02 Nicole Besseghir, CA, MSLIS, hired as Archives Assistant (professional, full-time)
- Mid-January First institutional history of AOH Archives prepared (posted to website)
- February Archives website revamped and relaunched; Sr. M. Clare Millea, ASCJ, appointed Assistant Chancellor (in preparation to becoming new Chancellor)
- March – August AOH central administrative offices relocate from Chancery to Pastoral Center (Archives staff and resource redirected to assist with office moves and records collection)
- June – July Archives collaborates with Office of Property and Assets on landscaping project relating to the Cathedral Campus Revitalization Project
- July 15 Official AOH “Hold Order” partially lifted by Chancellor (access to Archives records lifted but, with limitations)
- September First Location Guide for Parish Sacramental Records completed (posted to website)
- December 13 Nicole Besseghir resigns as Archives Assistant

2020

- March 17 AOH central administrative offices (includes Archives) close due to COVID-19 (all operations halted)
- June 01-May 2021 AOH central administrative offices (includes Archives) start “soft re-opening” and begin hybrid work model; Archives operates on a modified schedule and enacts COVID-19 protocols and quarantine guidelines (delays in service and workflow)
- June 20 Sr. M. Clare Millea, ASCJ, resigns as Assistant Chancellor to serve her Apostle mission in Ireland

2021

- January – February Archives engages major collection transfer project with Pastoral Center; additional space acquired
- February – May Archives collaborates with Hartford Bishops' Foundation on signage project for Cathedral Campus Memorial Garden
- April 03-25 AOH central administrative offices (includes Archives) disrupted by cyber attack (results in temporary loss of all IT services - delays in service and workflow)
- May 19 AOH central administrative offices (includes Archives) return to new COVID-19 work schedule (full work week but shortened hours; AOH Archives COVID-19 protocols remain in effect)
- Late June Archives re-starts conversations with O'Brien Library
- July 01 Archives resumes limited service to AOH administration and external researchers while continuing internal restructuring process and navigating ongoing COVID-19 issues
- Late August Review and updating of departmental policies begins along w/ collection processing of backlog material (part of restructuring process); Records Management Program re-started (halted in 2020 due to COVID-19)
- September 13 AOH central administrative offices (includes Archives) return to pre-pandemic (COVID-19) work schedule with new work hours (Archives maintains necessary COVID-19 restrictions)
- October 05 - November 15 AOH central administrative offices (includes Archives) disrupted by 2nd cyber attack (results in temporary loss of all IT and phone services; Archives digital files compromised; cooperation with O'Brien Library halted – delays in service and workflow)
- December 01 Change in Chancellor – Fr. Ryan M. Lerner (Chancellor, 2014-2021) reappointed to new position in New Haven by Archbishop Blair

2022

- January 05 Fr. Christopher Ford begins appointment as new Chancellor
- February AOH IT restructuring process begins across AOH (includes Archives) – results in periodic disruptions of IT services (delays in service and workflow)
- March – October Compromised Archives digital files reconstructed; internal restructuring continues
- Late September Collaboration with O’Brien Library resumes and rare book preservation project launched

ARCHIVISTS

Dates of Service (1976-present)

- **1st Sr. Dolores A. Liptak, RSM (1976-1985)**
Historian/ Emeritus Historian (part-time/full-time)
- **2nd Sr. Mary Jaskel, OSF (1985-1990)**
1st full-time Archivist
- **3rd Sr. Theresa McQueeney, SND (1990-1994)**
2nd full-time Archivist
- **4th Sr. Irene Fortier, DHS (1995-1996)**
Archivist (part-time)
- **5th Sr. Marjorie Fallon, RSM (1996-2001)**
Archivist (part-time)
- **6th Maria (Medina) Paxi, MLS (2001-2014)**
1st Professional Archivist (full-time)
- **7th Stephanie Gold, MS (2014-2015)**
2nd Professional Archivist (full-time)
- **8th Emily Bartram, MLS (2015-2016)**
3rd Professional Archivist (full-time)
- **9th Bridgette A. Woodall, M.Div, MLIS (2017-present)**
4th Professional Archivist (full-time)