

ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD



OFFICE OF THE ARCHDIOCESAN ARCHIVES

HISTORY

~History of the AOH Archives & Records Center~

The Archdiocesan Archives (est.1976) is an administrative office of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Hartford (AOH)

In preparation for the 1976 United States Bicentennial celebration, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops or NCCB (now the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops or USCCB) 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 for the Archdiocesan Archives was formed in 1975.

In October of 1975, a formal proposal plan for organizing the Archdiocesan Archives (AOH Archives) was prepared by Sr. Dolores A. Liptak, RSM, (Assistant Professor of History at St. Joseph College and doctoral candidate) and Vivian R. Stephenson (first women editor of *The Catholic Transcript* newspaper). In early 1976, Archbishop Whealon approved the proposal plan 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 (Archivist) and Vivian Stephenson (Research Assistant). Other early staff included Mary A. Caffrey (Coordinator); Harriet Foley (Typist/ Transcriptionist); Alice Angelo (Typist/Transcriptionist); Jay Griffith (Seminarian Assistant - summer 1976); Sr. M. Sarah, RSM (Latin Translator); and Msgr. John V. Horgan (French Translator).

The initial holdings of the AOH Archives comprised eight file drawers of unclassified correspondence and records (approx. 16 linear ft. of records). A budget of \$2,500 was allocated to the AOH 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 AOH Archives on a part-time basis. 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 the Archdiocese and in 1985, following her retirement, elevated her to Emeritus Historian (to date, she continues to hold the title).

Following Sr. Dolores' retirement, Sr. Mary Jaskel, OSF (1985-1990), was appointed as the first full-time AOH Archivist. She was succeeded by Sr. Theresa McQueeney, SND (1990-1994), Sr. Irene Fortier, DHS (1995-1996), and Sr. Marjorie Fallon, RSM (1996-2001). Under the leadership 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, F. 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 Archbishop Henry J. O'Brien Memorial Library ensued (located at St. Thomas Seminary/AOH Pastoral Center – Bloomfield, CT).

Following Ms. Medina's departure in 2014, two consecutive interim Archivists, Stephanie Gold, MLS (2014-2015) and Emily Bartram, MLS (2015-2016) were hired. In November 2016, the Chancellor closed the AOH 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 professional archival standards and current "best practices." To date, a full-scale inventory of the Archives holdings has been completed; a uniform cataloging system introduced; the website revamped; policies and procedures updated; COVID-19 protocols enacted; and a series of reference sources prepared. Additionally, the Records Center has been fully established and a records management program launched. Additional space has also been allocated for the expanding collections and operational needs of the AOH Archives. A backlog of unprocessed collections is currently being methodically and meticulously cataloged and properly preserved.

The AOH Archives has also engaged several collaborative projects:

- **2018** - Time Capsule/ Memorabilia Project
(Commemorating the 175th Archdiocesan Anniversary)
(Done in conjunction with the Office of Communications)
- **2021** - Assisting the Hartford Bishops' Foundation with research and historical sketches for the Cathedral's Memorial Garden Signage Project
(Commemorating Cathedral history and the St. Joseph Convent – RSM)
- **2022** – Rare Book Preservation Project
(Currently underway with the Archbishop O'Brien Library)

The AOH Archives receives approx. 200-300 research, project, and service requests annually from the internal administration and external researchers in addition to general inquiries and reference questions. Current holdings for the AOH Archives total over 2,000+ linear ft. of administrative, fiscal, legal, religious, historical, and official Church documents as well as religious/ sacred artwork and objects; personal papers; and reference material. The Archivist continues to manage both the Archives and the Records Center. Additionally, the Archivist maintains professional Archives memberships and engages professional development opportunities annually (representing the Archdiocese at related archival conferences, seminars, workshops, etc.)

AOH Archives webpage (located on the AOH website):

<https://archdioceseofhartford.org/archdiocesan-archives>