



ARCHDIOCESE of HARTFORD

Office of the Archdiocesan Archives

AOH ARCHIVES - HISTORY

IN THE BEGINNING

(1974-2001)

In preparation for the 1976 United States Bicentennial, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) [now the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)] issued a document entitled: *A Document on Ecclesiastical Archives*. The 1974 document urged Catholic 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 the Archdiocesan Archives was prepared by Sr. Dolores A. Liptak, RSM, (then Assistant Professor of History at St. Joseph College and a 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 (AOH Archives) was officially established and located at the Chancery (Hartford, CT).

Original Staff

- Sr. Dolores A. Liptak, RSM (Historian/ Archivist)
- Vivian R. Stephenson (Research Assistant)
- Mary A. Caffrey (Coordinator)
- Alice Angelo (Typist/ Transcriptionist)
- Harriet Foley (Typist/ Transcriptionist)
- Msgr. John V. Horgan-Kung (French Translator)
- Sr. M. Sarah, RSM (Latin Translator)
- Jay Griffith (Seminarist Assistant - summer 1976)

The initial holdings of the AOH Archives comprised two vertical file cabinets of unclassified correspondence and administrative records (approx. 16 linear ft. of records – 08 file drawers). A budget of \$2,500 was allocated to the AOH Archives, which covered the cost of educational expenses, resource material, membership fees, supplies, and a small stipend for Sr. Dolores.

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

Following Sr. Dolores' retirement, Sr. Mary Jaskel, OSF (Archivist, 1985-1990), was appointed as the first full-time AOH Archivist. She was succeeded by Sr. Theresa McQueeney, SND (Archivist, 1990-1994); Sr. Irene Fortier, DHS (Archivist, 1995-1996); and Sr. Marjorie Fallon, RSM (Archivist, 1996-2001). Under the leadership of these early religious sisters, 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).

TRANSITION & TRANSFORMATION PERIOD

(2001-2017)

In 2001, under the episcopacy of Archbishop Daniel A. Cronin, S.T.D., (1927-pres; Archbp., 1992-2003) the Archdiocesan administration committed to operating a professionally managed Archives and hired its first full-time professional Archivist, F. Maria (Medina) Paxi, MLS (Archivist, 2001-2014). Ms. Medina introduced professional archives policies and procedures and was instrumental in laying the groundwork for an internal 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 (then part of the Archdiocesan Center at St. Thomas Seminary – Bloomfield, CT). [*The O'Brien Library was established in 1896 as part of the newly founded St. Thomas Seminary (Hartford, CT). In 1930, the seminary relocated to Bloomfield, CT. and later became known as the Archdiocesan Center at St. Thomas Seminary. Today, the seminary building functions as the AOH Pastoral Center.*]

Following Ms. Medina's departure in 2014, two consecutive Archivists were hired: Stephanie Gold, MLS (Archivist, 2014-2015), and Emily Bartram, MLS (Archivist, 2015-2016). In November 2016, following the rapid turnover and an ensuing vacancy, the Chancellor closed the AOH Archives indefinitely and suspended all services pending the vacancy. During the indefinite closure, the AOH Archives temporarily fell into disrepair.

RESTRUCTURING PROCESS - PRESENT

(2017-Present)

In late September 2017, Bridgette A. Woodall, M.Div, MLIS (Archivist, 2017-present), was hired as the next full-time professional Archivist. Starting in 2018, a long-term restructuring process was initiated to overhaul the internal operations of the AOH Archives, reinstate professional archives standards, and align the office with the new archdiocesan 2014 Pastoral Plan (initiated under the episcopacy of Archbishop Leonard P. Blair, 1949-pres; Archbp., 2013-2024).

With the addition of a new Assistant Archivist, Lindsey Restelli, MLIS, (starting in November 2024) the AOH Archives is once again making strides with its daily operations and records management procedures; collection development and preservation activities; reference and research assistance; programing and resource instruction; etc.

So, having persevered through many changes and challenges (including COVID-19) and a series of historic AOH celebrations, the AOH Archives is again on track to meeting its full potential as a professionally managed Archives and ensuring its mission to collect and preserve the official and ancillary records of enduring value for the Archdiocese continues.

NOTABLE PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

(2018-pres)

- **2018-2022 – AOH Archives restructuring project**
- **2018 – AOH Archivist interviews with *Hartford Courant***
- **2018 – AOH Records Center completed & Records Management Program launched**
- **2018 - Time Capsule/ Memorabilia Project launched w/ Office of Communications**

- **2018-2019 – 1st full-scale inventory audit of AOH Archives general holdings conducted**
- **2019 – 1st institutional history of AOH Archives prepared**
- **2019 – 1st Location Guide for Parishes & Sacramental Records prepared**
- **2019 – AOH Archives initiates call to provide aid for the devastating Notre Dame Cathedral (Paris, France) fire via ACDA support - resulting in a unified letter of solidarity from ACDA to the ICA and establishing annual donation to the SAA Foundation's National Disaster Recovery Fund for Archives**
- **2019 – AOH Archives website revamped & relaunched (refreshed in 2023 & again updated in 2025 with new AOH website relaunch)**
- **2020 – AOH Archives among the 1st to prepare & implement COVID-19 protocols for Diocesan Archives**
- **2021 - Cathedral Memorial Garden Signage Project w/ Hartford Bishops' Foundation (research & text design for Cathedral & RSM Convent)**
- **2023 – AOH 175th Anniversary Time Capsule completed & housed onsite in AOH Archives**
- **2024 – Receipt of Aux. Bp. Peter A. Rosazza Papers**
- **2024 - Receipt of Sr. Dolores A. Liptak, RSM, Papers**
- **2025 – AOH Bishops' Display Wall installed (AOH Archives)**
- **2026 – AOH Archives 50th Anniversary**