

# Spotlight on Archives

## Archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden

by Kathleen M. Washy

In 1869, three Sisters of St. Joseph arrived in Ebensburg, Pa. from Flushing, NY on a mission to establish a branch of the Sisters of St. Joseph. The sisters' intent was to establish a boys' seminary and within a few days, they had opened the Mount Gallitzin Seminary for Boys. After three decades of growth, the sisters moved their motherhouse from Ebensburg to Baden, Pa. dedicating their new building on January 1, 1902. When they moved to this new location, they brought with them daybooks dating back to 1869. These financial books itemized every transaction that occurred in a day, including everything from a shoe repair for a Sister to the purchasing of notebooks for the students in the school. The sisters continued to maintain these daybooks until the early 1920s, resulting in 18 volumes of detailed recordkeeping.

Today, these 18 volumes are preserved in the archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden, providing researchers with a glimpse into the past lives of the sisters. According to Sr. Sally Witt, CSJ, congregational archivist, these and other early archival records are not only a wealth of information but also are a way to experience the past, or as she phrases it: "Seeing someone's handwriting is a way of being in touch with them." The archives collection consists of records from 1869 to present and continues to grow, with new records being generated by today's sisters. The community's leadership is extremely supportive of the archives, ensuring that the sisters' current contributions to the community are well represented.

With its wealth of material, the archives is a valuable resource from which information is drawn to answer a variety of requests. Sr. Sally receives questions from many different inquirers, including genealogists, individuals doing research for parish anniversaries, the Sisters of St. Joseph administrators, and school alumni planning reunions. She delves into the archives in search of answers for each request and has a sense of fulfillment upon discovery of the requested information.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden Archives not only provides insight into the sisters' lives, but also is a snapshot of the surrounding community in which they have been and continue to be active. From their home base in

Baden, the sisters have reached out to the community with their ministries in health care, social service, education, and spiritual care. Over time, the sisters adjusted their services to meet the changing needs of the community, such as the shift that they have made in health care. In 1904, they opened St. Joseph Hospital on Carson Street in Pittsburgh's South Side, supplying health care to the South Side residents, particularly to the mill workers. With the changes in the city's needs, St. Joseph Hospital was consolidated into South Hills Health System in 1977. Since then, the sisters responded to more recent community needs by establishing a skilled nursing facility, the Villa St. Joseph in Baden. The archives documents these activities of the Sisters of St. Joseph.



Faculty and students of Mt. Gallitzin High School visiting Harrisburg, Mary 1958 • Courtesy of The Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden Archives



Sr. Mariana Garde and patient at St. Joseph Hospital, Carson St., Pittsburgh • Courtesy of The Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden Archives

## Archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden (continued)

Additionally, the archives serves as a resource for various projects, including ones that support the sisters' commitment to education. A current project is the revival of educational material developed by Sr. Jean Ortenzo, CSJ, in 1984 through her company Crosspoint. She created an audio-visual educational piece on the Stations of the Cross, using photographic images taken at St. Anthony Chapel on Troy Hill. These images and accompanying curriculum material were placed in the congregational archives and now have a contemporary use. The current plan is to transfer the audio-visual material to DVD in order to make it accessible to today's educators.

Other invaluable records within the archives document the sisters' outreach in their missionary work to China between 1926 and 1948. While in China, the sisters ministered to the people of the Hunan Province by serving in both an orphanage and a hospital. While there, they also attracted a new member to their order, Sr. Theresa Joseph Lung. Entering the congregation in 1933, Sr. Theresa served her entire ministry in Hunan, where she remained when the sisters left in 1948. When she died in 1994, she died as a Sister of St. Joseph. The dedication of the sisters to their mission throughout the world is evident throughout these records.

The archives of this religious community set on the Ohio River is just one of the many different types of archives within the Diocese of Pittsburgh, all of which detail the rich history of the Catholic Church in Western Pennsylvania.

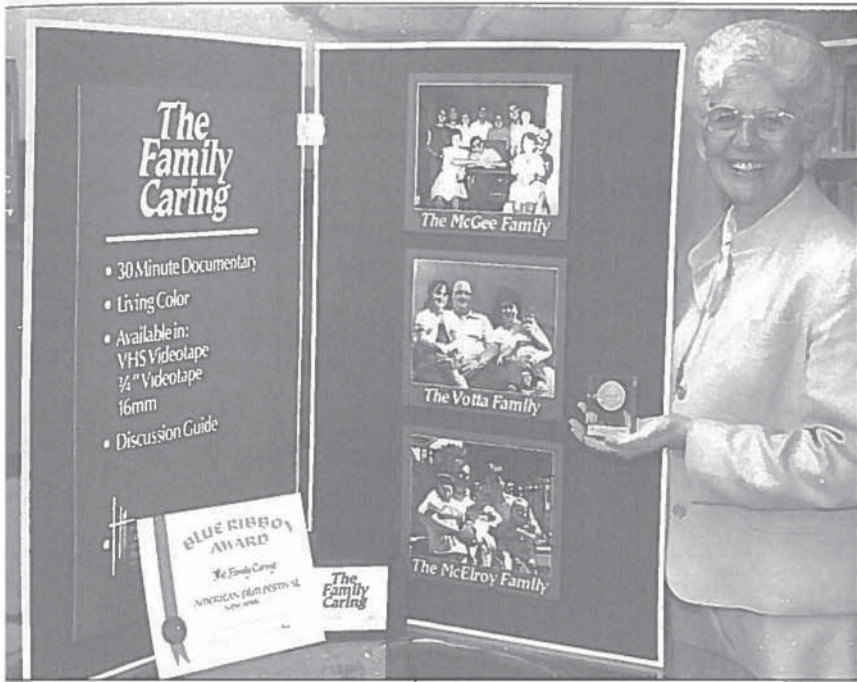
For more information on the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden Archives, contact Sr. Sally Witt at : 724-869-6523 or [archivescsj@stjoseph-baden.org](mailto:archivescsj@stjoseph-baden.org).

*Kathleen M. Washy is archivist for UPMC Mercy and board member of the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.*



Sr. Sally Witt, Archivist (right) in the archives with Barbara Hetrick, team leader for housekeeping (left)





**Sr. Jean Ortenzo started Crosspoint Communications in the 1980s. Photographed with an award for a video that she produced titled "The Family Caring."**  
 Courtesy of The Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden Archives



**Sr. Mary Aquin Sigris and music pupil, 1970**  
 Courtesy of The Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden Archives