

2020 REPORT OF THE ARCHIVIST

Over the course of a year, the Diocesan Archives continued to provide researchers with easy access to historical information. By using the archive classification document, researchers found a variety of carefully organized paper files, newsletters, books, photographs and other materials to enhance their inquiries. The archives grew this year as material arrived from various individuals and parishes.

During this year, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Harrisburg, PA, dedicated a chapel in honor of St. Augustine's Mission, Harrisburg, PA. The complex history of St. Augustine's included more than one name change and a property relocation. St. Augustine's Mission was established in 1907 and the parish house and rectory were located behind the State Capitol building at 433 North Avenue (the old 8th Ward). Named after St. Augustine of Hippo, an African Bishop and church father of the 5th century, the church served the local African American community. The church was leveled around 1911 to make room for the Capitol Park extension and was relocated to the corner of 1300 Herr Street, Harrisburg. In 1956, St. Augustine's was closed by Bishop Heistand to attain integration with other Harrisburg churches. The church history that was revealed for this dedication was filed in the archives.

Genealogy requests continued to be a major factor in archive research. Researching closed parish registers for family members, as well as researching the location of a parish dedication plaque were two archive examples. Other types of archive research included the compilation of priests who served in a parish and the exploration of convention resolutions to determine actions of the Diocese. Anti-racism research continued to be an important aspect of the Diocesan Archives.

A request was made by the Columbia Historical Preservation Society regarding an oil painting that was gifted to the Diocese. The Society needed an image of an oil painting of Lloyd Mifflin (poet, painter and sculptor) for an exhibit. Archival research discovered a 1927 newspaper article that was preserved in a Bishop Darlington scrapbook (Bishop of the Harrisburg Diocese). The newspaper article included an image of the painting as well as information about the artist, the presentation, and the details of Bishop Darlington's acceptance of the gift.

Many archival files were given to the Diocesan Archives after the closure of the Episcopal Home in September 2020. The Diocesan Home for the Aged opened in 1927 as a mission of the Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania. The history of the Home was well documented through photographs of staff, residents, and the Home and through numerous files highlighting minutes, reports, correspondence, blueprints, newspaper articles and historical data. The Home began as a residence for several ladies of the Diocese who were alone and without family and, under the leadership of Executive Director Canon Mary Grace Shearer, the Home experienced an increase of residents and welcomed many building upgrades. Canon Mary Grace Shearer upheld the mission of the Home to care for low-income and aged individuals. The Diocesan Archives welcomed this addition to its collection.

Parish anniversary celebrations provided another reason for archive research. The dedicated committee of researchers at St. John's, Huntingdon, PA, continued to uncover historical data for their 200th anniversary celebration. Trinity Episcopal Church, Chambersburg, PA, also engaged in archival research for the anniversary celebration of Trinity's 150th anniversary.

A Shaped By Faith (SBF) webinar series was conducted in the spring of 2021. The “Celebrating Our Common Story” component of SBF was divided into the following webinar categories (1) Gathering Your Oral History, (2) Writing Your Parish History, (3) Creating a Parish Archive, (4) Telling Your Parish’s Stories, and (5) Celebrating Our Stories. The Creating a Parish Archive webinar was developed by The Rev. Cn. Chris Streeter, Canon for Mission, Development and Innovation, Carolyn Patterson, Bishop’s Assistant, and Debbie Robelen, Diocesan Archivist. This webinar was designed to equip diocesan parishes with the tools to create and maintain a parish archive system. An example of discussion topics included the preservation of records and the identification of records to keep. The webinar is available on the diocesan website (www.diocesecpa.org) along with information about Shaped By Faith. The National Episcopal Historians and Archivists publication “Archives for Congregations, A Practical Guide to Developing a Church Archives” is also available through the Diocese free of charge.

The Pennsylvania State Archives offered a series of webinars in the spring of 2021. These webinars were designed to gather archivists and community groups to share their experiences collecting and preserving their community’s stories. The information gathered from the webinars was beneficial to the Diocese and will be used as a tool to shape our own unique history.

The work of the Diocesan Archives is achieved through the support and effort of many individuals. Our Bishop, Audrey Scanlan, provides encouragement and attention to the administration of the archives. Carolyn Patterson’s knowledge of the Diocese and her participation in archive management aids in the day to day operation of the archives. The archives also benefit from the support and input provided by Chad Linder, Canon for Finance and Operations. A continued commitment to uphold the integrity of the Diocesan Archives will ensure the preservation of our Diocesan history.

Respectfully submitted,

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