



# Archival Connections

*Newsletter of the Catholic Archivist Group*

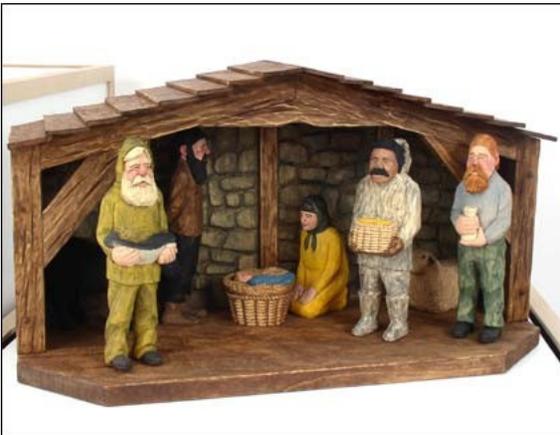
Volume 2, Number 1

**Winter 2005**

## **From the Chair – Gayle Desarmia, sp**

May this New Year hold many blessings for each of you personally and for your archival endeavours! Linda Wicks, Jim Mason and I had two executive meetings last fall. We decided that this year we would focus on membership, election procedures for the Treasurer and ratification of the constitution. Communication with Catholic Archivist Group members will always be a priority. Thank you to all who have submitted articles for this our second newsletter. We hope that others will be inspired to submit articles for our spring newsletter. Let us hear what is happening in your archives.

## **Away in a Manger – Larry Dohey**



This Christmas the Basilica Cathedral Museum in St. John's launched the exhibit "Away in a Manger" from November 27 - December 19, 2004 which featured 55 nativities scenes from around the world. The exhibit proved to be very successful, organizers staff recorded more than 1000 visitors.

The styles of the nativities varied from traditional nativities sculpted in marble to locally produced nativities made with pipe cleaners. Highlighted at the exhibit were nativities created by local

Newfoundland and Labrador crafts persons, Kevin Coates, Brenda Rowe and Carolyn Morgan who brought a particular Newfoundland content and interpretation to their nativity scenes. The Kevin Coates, 'Newfoundland Nativity' had 'three fishermen' rather than the 'three kings'. All nativities on exhibit were loaned to the museum by individuals from St. John's and surrounding communities, inspiring the community spirit that surrounds Christmas.

Sister Perpetua Kennedy, the Chair of the Basilica Museum Committee said that "the exhibit proved to be very popular with adults and children of all ages." A brief history of the origins of nativities, Christmas trees and Advent wreaths engaged all ages and an activity space was provided for younger children.

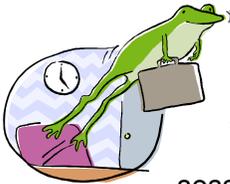
The exhibit was very popular with school groups with visits from fifteen classes from schools throughout the city. Prompted by the schools interest, Sister Perpetua said

“ the Basilica Museum has partnered with the local public school board, the largest in the province, to develop a web site that will feature the nativity exhibit for the grade four curriculum in the province which focuses on symbols of world religions.” The web site will feature images of the exhibit as well as text on the Christian history and tradition of nativities, Christmas trees and Advent wreaths.

The exhibit garnered considerable press coverage with the local media including spots on the local CBC's Morning Show, as well as live interviews on the evening CBC news hour show and extensive articles in the local papers.

Given the success of this year's exhibit, Sister Perpetua said that “ the Basilica Museum Committee hopes to make this nativity exhibit an annual event with many more nativities and activities related to the exhibit.” More that 100 nativity scenes have been committed to the exhibit for Christmas 2005.

### **A FROG takes a giant leap forward!! – Diane Lamoureux**



For the last few years a few of us working as archivists for various Faith and Religious organizations in Alberta have been trying to establish a special interest group loosely attached to the Archives Society of Alberta (ASA).

In the past, several of us have gotten together for information sessions dealing with issues of common interest to Archivists working within these organizations. I personally found these sessions useful and have had others come forward with similar feedback.

So, in December 2004, Jane Bowe-McCarthy, Archivist for the United Church of Canada and I hosted a brown-bag lunch session at the Provincial Archives of Alberta. The main objective of the session was to re-establish the group and to try and set up an informal schedule of meetings so that the issues that continue to be of interest to the various organizations can be addressed.

The initial meeting had representatives from the Catholic, United, Anglican and Moravian Church organizations, including myself representing the Missionary Oblates and Eloi Degrace in his new position with the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton (formerly with the Sisters of Providence). We will try to have these casual brown-bag gatherings once every two months or so and have invited others, including archivists from the Lutheran Church and Franciscan Friars, among others, to join our group.

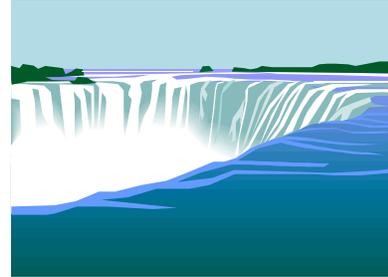
The group had initial discussions relating to topics of common interest, namely grants and other funding sources, membership in the ASA, types of work that needs to be done, and how to deal with photos and artifacts. These are issues that we have found are ones that we all have to deal with to some degree. The other common issues, of course, are money and man-power. Most of us have a back-log of material to be processed and no time to do the work. A few of us are lucky enough to have volunteers to take care of special projects, but the main bulk of the archival work still falls to the Archivist. For those of us who have our records in public facilities, there is the added difficulty of trying to deal with research and reference requests, and still try to get some archival processing done.

One of the main reasons for forming the group is to provide a support network to other archivists working in or just coming into Faith and Religious Organization Archives – many of whom have had no previous training or real archives experience.

We have tentatively called our group – AFROG – Archivists of Faith and Religious Organizations Group. We invite Archivists for other Faith and Religious Organizations in Alberta to join our group.

### **2005 Conference, September 19-22, Niagara Falls, Ontario – M.C. Havey**

Michael Higgins, president of St. Jerome's University, affiliated with the University of Waterloo, will be a dinner speaker at the annual conference in September at Mount Carmel Retreat Centre overlooking Niagara Falls. President Higgins is a well-regarded historian, newspaper columnist and commentator on the CBC. Other conference speakers include Father Jacques Monet, s.j., Sister Eileen Grahagan CSJ, historian Michael Power, Archivist and museum director Larry Dohey and museum conservator Catherine Rice. The conference dates are September 19-22 and its theme is "Telling Our Story." The conference brochure and registration form will be mailed in the spring.



The planning committee is asking participants to bring publications that have used material from their archival holdings. Some communities have their own published histories, oral histories, dictionaries of biography or have been part of other historical writings. These publications will be displayed during the conference for the interest of all participants.

*Mount Carmel Spiritual Centre is a ministry of the Carmelites. Located on 12 acres of park-like land, this retreat and conference centre overlooks the world famous Niagara Falls. It is a brief 10-minute walk to the Canadian Horseshoe Falls. Visit their website at [www.carmelniagara.com](http://www.carmelniagara.com).*

### **Words from Prince Albert - Sister Patricia Brochu, p.m**

To all, best wishes for 2005!

January's bitter cold has not frozen the activity in the Archives of the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary in Prince Albert, SK. Since last spring we have been holding a project on the back burner, namely that of participating in a travelling display organized under the direction of Mme Martine Tinjoud, museologist, with the assistance of Roger Lafrenière, designer and photographer, both of St Boniface. Circulation of the display is to take place in 2005-2006 throughout Manitoba, Sask. and Alberta showing the contribution to and support of the French language and culture in Western Canada by French speaking Religious Communities. The written components will be bilingual and geared to both young and old.

Our concern today: the search for pertinent material. I enjoy it!

## Membership – Linda Wicks

As of January 31st, the 2005 membership includes 28 new and renewed members. Please forward your membership fees as soon as possible to Linda Wicks, Secretary, 3377 Bayview Avenue, Toronto, ON M2M 3S4. Elections for the new treasurer are scheduled for this Spring and ballots will be sent out to our current 2005 members.

## Conserving an Archival Treasure – Rodney Carter

Like most archives, the St. Joseph Region Archives is comprised of a diverse group of material. In addition to maintaining the historical, non-medical records of RHSJ institutions and the personal papers of the Sisters who served in the region, the Archives preserves a group of varied objects which form what is called the Heritage Collection.

Of the many interesting objects held in this collection, perhaps the most spectacular are two large framed paper reliquaries. While both of these objects are in fairly good condition, one of the reliquaries had suffered significant damage to the frame. In order to conserve such an object, the skills of a trained professional are required.

On October 3, 2004 the Queen's University Master of Art Conservation program held an Art Conservation Clinic in order to raise funds for the students and to heighten awareness of the program and conservation practitioners in the Kingston community. Conservators at the clinic, both seasoned professionals and students of the program, were on hand to offer advice on how to best restore, preserve, and protect art objects. The St. Joseph Region archives brought their reliquary to be examined.

The St. Patrick Reliquary, made in 1880 by the Sisters of Hotel Dieu of Montreal to mark the occasion of the appointment of Bishop James Vincent Cleary as Bishop of Kingston, made quite an impression on the conservators, art historians, and members of the public who were on hand at the Clinic. The three conservators who examined the reliquary and gave their appraisal of the object remarked that they had never seen anything quite like it.

They noted that, by and large, the reliquary was in very good condition. With the exception of a few pieces, the paper quilling remained intact and seemed stable and the precious metals used to create the ornate decoration did not suffer from discolouration. This indicates that the case was sealed tightly. They recommended that, while it would be possible to re-glue the pieces that had come loose, it would probably be best to leave



things as they are, as there is no way of telling how the materials would react when exposed to the atmosphere.

The frame suffered the most damage over the years, becoming chipped and loose. It consists of two parts. The first is made of wood that has been painted gold and silver. The silver was used to create a decorative pattern, which has become discoloured and is now black. The second part is of ebony that has been decoratively carved and filled with faux-ivory. The conservator indicated that the missing pieces of the frame could be filled with gesso and then painted to match the original colour and that the frame could be stabilized. For storing the reliquary, the conservator suggested placing foam underneath to ensure that no undue pressure is placed on the object.

The Archives is grateful for the opportunity to have one of their treasures examined by a professional and hopes to utilize the services of one of the conservators who attended the Clinic to restore the frame of the reliquary. The expertise that was shared will aid in the reliquary's long-term preservation, and will ensure that it remains a part of the collective memory of the congregation.

### Publication Schedule

The newsletter will be published December 1 (Fall issue), February 1 (Winter issue) and May 1 (Spring issue).

Submit your news items, articles and photographs by November 15, January 15 and April 15.

The next deadline is April 15, 2005.

### Catholic Archivist Group Executive – Contact Information

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