
Saint Francis Day Care Center Collection: Sisters of the Holy Family Day Home on Powell Street in San Francisco

Sisters of the Holy Family Archives

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Title: Saint Francis Day Care Center Collection: Sisters of the Holy Family Day Home on Powell Street in San Francisco

Date (inclusive): 1880-1977

Collection number: SHF-002

Creator: Sisters of the Holy Family

Extent: 8 Linear Feet

Contributing Institution: Sisters of the Holy Family Archives

Abstract: Enrollment records, reports, teaching materials and photographs from the Saint Francis day care center in San Francisco, California. 8 linear feet of materials from 1880 to 1977.

Languages: English

Access

Medical records in this collection are restricted and access to them is determined on a case by case basis.

Publication Rights

Please contact the Sisters of the Holy Family Archives for permission to publish

Preferred Citation

Sisters of the Holy Family Core Collection. SHF-002. Sisters of the Holy Family Archives, Fremont, California

Acquisition Information

Collection materials created by the Sisters of the Holy Family

Arrangement

The materials are divided into three series, which are grouped by subject of materials and then organized within each series by date

Series 1. Enrollment, Family Registration and Attendance Records, 1919-1977. Attendance, enrollment and registration books, family record cards and case records. These records include restricted medical cards with children's immunization information.

Series 2. Lesson Plans and Materials from Sister's Child Care Work, 1886-1977. Lesson plans, class work, song books, scrapbooks, instructions for making toys, Sister's accounts of working in the day homes, and book of charges, or job assignments for Sisters.

Series 3. Administrative Materials, 1880-1977. Reports and studies, copies of articles from newspapers, correspondence, legal documents, sale of property documents and photographs.

Biographical / Historical Note

The Sisters of the Holy Family were established in San Francisco in 1872 by a young woman named Elizabeth "Lizzie" Armer. Born in 1850 in Sydney, Australia, Lizzie moved with her family to San Francisco while still a young child and was adopted by the wealthy San Francisco banker Richard Tobin and his family.

In 1872, at the age of twenty-two, Lizzie Armer approached a local priest named Father Prendergast and expressed her desire to join a community of women religious. Prendergast, with the support of Archbishop Joseph Sadoc Alemany, urged Lizzie to form a new community of Sisters with a focus on charitable work for families in need: the Sisters of the Holy Family of San Francisco (SHF). Between 1872 and 1878, Lizzie, now Mother Dolores Armer, and her loyal supporter, Sister Teresa O'Connor, worked to establish the Holy Family Sisters as a unique order of women religious in the San Francisco Archdiocese.

By the first decades of the 20th century, membership in SHF had expanded significantly and the Holy Family Sisters began to spread out their operations further afield in California. Residential houses serving as sub-convents were established in San Jose, Oakland and Los Angeles; soon SHF also moved into Nevada and the Hawaiian Islands, eventually also reaching Utah and Alaska. From their new houses, SHF Sisters continued their ministries, focused primarily on child care, Catholic summer schools, and other assistance for low-income and often marginalized communities such as migrant agricultural workers.

The first day care center operated by the Holy Family Sisters was built at 1413 Powell Street in 1881 and was known as Saint Francis Day Home. By the 1910s, SHF was also operating other child care centers in San Francisco and the greater Bay Area. Following the 1906 Earthquake and the destruction of all of their San Francisco day homes, SHF Sisters also offered free child care in tents in the refugee camps in Washington Square and Lobos Park at Geary and 18th Streets. Saint Francis Day Home was rebuilt at 1441 Powell Street in 1909.

The Sisters began by caring for the young children of working families, and soon expanded into after-school care for older children. From the 1880s to approximately the late 1940s, the day home primarily served Catholic Italian and Irish families in North Beach, but by 1948 the registration books show that the day home was also serving the nearby Chinatown

community. Fees were adjusted for the income of families; on average about 150 children attended per year and 110 of them attended for free. Sisters solicited charitable donations for the operations of the day homes and required little in compensation for themselves.

The day homes provided a clean place with warm meals for the children, as well as activities based on the theories of pre-school education by Frederick Froebel, which emphasized learning through play. The lesson plans blended songs and games about the seasons, shapes, colors, and other pre-school topics with Catholic catechism and hymns.

By the 1950s, Saint Francis Day Home was coming under criticism for antiquated facilities—the outdoor play area was small and the interiors were still in the style of the early 1900s. A study in 1975 found the child care services to be excellent but reported the building at 1441 Powell Street was in need of structural upgrades. SHF determined that the expense was beyond their financial abilities and by February of 1976, the Sisters had placed children at Saint Francis in other day care centers. After 96 years of operation, Saint Francis Day Home closed in May of 1976.

Scope and Contents

The collection is comprised of materials from the Holy Family Sister's Catholic day care center known as Saint Francis Day Home in the border of North Beach and Chinatown neighborhoods in San Francisco.

Materials include photographs, reports, studies, and teaching materials including lesson plans and song books. There is a series of enrollment and attendance records and ledgers with information gathered about children attending the day home and their families.

There is also a set of restricted medical records pertaining to tuberculosis immunization and other vaccinations.

Sisters of the Holy Family (San Francisco, Calif.)

San Francisco Bay Area (Calif.)

Chinatown (San Francisco, Calif.)

North Beach (San Francisco, Calif.)

Family Day Care

Kindergarten

Religious Education
