Sisters of the Holy Family in the Hawaiian Islands Collection: The Big Island, Oahu and Molokai

Sisters of the Holy Family Archives
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Title: Sisters of the Holy Family in the Hawaiian Islands Collection: The Big Island, Oahu and Molokai
Date (inclusive): 1943-2011
Collection number: SHF-005
Creator: Sisters of the Holy Family
Extent: 5 Linear Feet
Contributing Institution: Sisters of the Holy Family Archives
Abstract: Hand-written annals manuscripts documenting life and work of Sisters, photographs—many of summer-time vacation schools—correspondence, and newspaper articles from the ministries on Hawaiian Islands. 5 linear feet of materials, predominantly from 1947 to 1979.
Languages: English
Access
Collection is open for research
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-005. 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 two series: materials from the Sister's residences (annals, correspondence, ephemera, and articles), and vacation schools photographs.
Series 1. Materials from houses are organized by house location alphabetically, 1943-2009.
Series 2. Materials from vacation schools are organized by vacation school location alphabetically, 1940-2011.
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 eventually 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 Bishop 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 the second woman to join the new community, Sister Teresa O’Connor, worked to establish the Holy Family Sisters as a small order under the San Francisco Archdiocese.
By the first decades of the 20th century, membership in SHF had expanded significantly and the Sisters began to spread out their operations further afield in California. Residential houses that served as sub-convents were established in San Jose, Oakland and Los Angeles; soon SHF also moved into Nevada and the Hawaiian Islands. From their new houses, SHF Sisters continued their ministries, including child care and Catholic summer schools for working class families, and for low-income and often marginalized communities such as migrant agricultural workers.
On the Hawaiian Islands, epidemics of foreign diseases in the 1830s led to disastrous population decline. By the 1890s, populations surged again due to influxes of immigrants, in particular from China, Japan, Korea, Puerto Rico and Portugal. Many Puerto Rican and Portuguese immigrants continued and adapted the Catholic religious practices that they brought from their previous homelands.
Mother Celestine Delahanty sent the first Holy Family Sisters from San Francisco to Hawai‘i in 1947. At this time, SHF established their first residential house on the Big Island in Honokaa. In 1948, four more Sisters joined the first group and added another convent on the Big Island, in Mountain View. In 1955 SHF added a third house on the Big Island in Kailua-Kona, and, in 1966, one in Honolulu on Oahu. The three Big Island houses served nearly all of the fourteen parishes on the island including the families living and working on the rural plantations.
Sisters who worked on the islands in the 1950s and 1960s recall that at the time there were no paved roads, no power, and the only source of water was from rain cisterns. In addition to home and hospital visits, SHF Sisters in Hawai‘i led Sunday school and summer-time vacation school classes, and helped prepare children for First Communion and Confirmation.
In 1979, the Holy Family Sisters closed several of their houses in Hawai‘i and had Sisters serving in the islands return to the mainland to work in other mission locations. Mountain View, Kona and the Honokaa houses closed in the 1970s, while the
Honolulu Oahu house remained open until 1981. As of 2009, only one SHF Sister continued to work in Hawai‘i at St. Raphael’s Parish in Koloa. Over forty Holy Family Sisters spent some portion of their service working in Hawai‘i parishes.

Scope and Contents

The collection is comprised of hand-written annals manuscripts documenting the daily life of the community of Holy Family Sisters in the Hawaiian Islands, including correspondence, copies of articles, ephemera and a significant quantity of photographic prints.

The materials pertain to the missionary work of Holy Family Sisters on the Hawaiian Islands, primarily the Big Island, but also including Oahu and occasional trips to Molokai.

Sisters of the Holy Family (San Francisco, Calif.)
Hawaii Island (Hawaii)
Oahu (Hawaii)
Molokai (Hawaii)
Religious Education