

Heritage Center opens, chronicles Holy Names

07/06/2007 Kate Chester

LAKE OSWEGO – Nearly 150 years ago, a dozen young women – Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary – left Quebec and headed for Oregon. Along the way, they made an indelible imprint on the development of the Pacific Northwest.

At long last, their stories and precious archival histories of the U.S.-Ontario Province will be shared with the public by way of the newly opened Holy Names Heritage Center, located on the campus of Marylhurst University.



Sentinel photo by Kate Chester
The Heritage Center's Chair, Holy Names Sister Jane Hibbard; executive director Tamra Brosseau and manager of archival collections, Sarah Cantor.

The distinctive building features a stucco exterior with a tile roof and 40-foot tower and is the first building that visitors encounter when they visit the campus, which includes the university as well as the sister's Provincial House and the Mary's Woods residential and continuing care facility. Funding for the Heritage Center came from several grants and numerous private donors, and totaled \$5 million.

More than 500 attendees celebrated the public opening of the long-awaited center late last month, and "it was amazing," said Tamra Brosseau, the center's executive director. "We were just thrilled with the turnout, the support, the enthusiasm and the spirit."

The center serves as a museum, housing and sharing the archives of the sisters so that significant stories, historical development and the societal impact of the Holy Names' presence in the Pacific Northwest can be shared, all of which highlights the sisters' partnerships and contributions to Northwest life.

The center's archives are available for public exhibition, scholarly study and reference. Brosseau will be joined by Sarah Cantor, manager of archival collections, and a staff of dedicated volunteers to organize exhibitions, lectures and seminars at the center throughout the year.

Other programs to be offered include workshops on preserving family histories; a family history project enabling families to build a data bank about their relatives and their

presence in the Northwest; and specialized classroom activities created in partnership with local educational schools and organizations. The Heritage Center also is available to rent for business meetings, special events and family celebrations.

“We have two public rooms, a research room and private work areas,” says Brosseau, and approximately 600 square feet serves as public exhibition space. Currently, the center is displaying the “Adventurous Spirits!” exhibit on the early missions of the Holy Names Sisters in the United States and Ontario, Canada.

The center also offers an outdoor patio framed by the peaceful Mildred Rotter Garden, complete with a bubbling brook and brilliant flowers and foliage.

The garden was named in memory of the blood sister of Holy Names Sister Annemarie Rotter. Known as “Millie,” she was generous to the sisters throughout her lifetime. When she died, she left a significant bequest to Sister Annemarie, who gave it to the sisters and honored Millie by naming the garden after her.

The Holy Names Heritage Center is open to the public each Wednesday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information, visit www.holynamesheritagecenter.org or call (503) 607-0595.