HWR Network News

Carol Coburn, program committee chair, reports that a Call for Papers will be sent to HWR Conference members in February, inviting proposals for panels or single papers for presentation at the Sixth Triennial Conference, at the Atchison Heritage Conference Center in Atchison, Kansas, June 27-30, 2004. She and local arrangements chair, Judith Sutera OSB, are also setting up a website linked to the Benedictine monastery and conference site in Atchison as a central source of information on the June, 2004, meeting.

A word of clarification for continuing and new members: HWR network membership is synonymous with the newsletter subscription list and now stands at 537 including 18 new subscriptions. HWR's purpose, to facilitate networking among persons interested in the history of religious congregations of women, is promoted through the newsletter and a triennial conference. Your subscription renewal date is indicated next to your name on the address label. Please contact the editor with any questions, or to secure 2004 Triennial Conference information if you fail to receive it by March of this year.

Material for the newsletter, and inquiries about contacting subscribers, should be sent to the editor at the newsletter address or by email <KKennelly33@hotmail.com> Publications being submitted for review, and inquiries about writing reviews, may be sent directly to book review editor, Regina Siegfried, at 3800 Lindell Blvd, P.O. Box 56907, St. Louis, MO 63156; email <siegfrr@slu.edu>

Publications


Marcel Launay, Hélène de Chappotin (1839-1904) et les Franciscaines missionnaires de Marie, ‘Oser sa vie’ (Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 2001), gives us the first biography of this founder of an international religious society today numbering 8,200 members from 72 countries.


Ellen Whelan, OSF, The Sisters’ Story: Saint Mary’s
Hospital-Mayo Clinic 1889-1939 (privately printed, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, Rochester, Minnesota, 2002) develops the extraordinary story of the Franciscan Sisters who teamed up with the doctors Mayo to found a medical complex of worldwide fame.

Mary van Balen Holt, Meet Katherine Drexel: Heiress and God's Servant of the Oppressed (privately printed, Servant Publications, 2002) provides a well-documented biography from a contemporary perspective.


Suellen Hoy, “Ministering Hope to Chicago,” Chicago History, Fall, 2002, pp. 4-23, continues to enlighten readers regarding the ministry of women religious in Chicago’s African-American neighborhoods.

Barbara E. Mattick’s “Ministries in Black and White: The Catholic Nuns of St. Augustine, 1859-1869,” presented at a seminar on women in the New South, will be published as part of an anthology, Lives Full of Struggle and Triumph: Southern Women, Their Institutions, Their Communities, eds. Bruce Clayton and John Salmond (University of Florida Press, Spring 2003).

Jeanne Schweikert, SSSF, Standing at the Crossroads: Religious Orders and Reconfiguration (Convergence, Inc., Chicago, 2002) assesses the experience of union, merger, or reunification involving 15 congregations in the United States over the past several decades.

Ann Kessler, OSB, notes that her publication, Benedictine Men and Women of Courage: Roots and History, out of print for several years, is now available in an updated and slightly revised version, in print or CD ROM, from the author at the Monastery, 1005 W. 8th St., Yankton, SD 57078.

The first Colloquia organized by the Australian Catholic University Women’s History, Theology and Spirituality Research Project Team, held in June, 2002, included presentations by Kerrie Hide, “The Soteriology of Julian of Norwich,” drawn from her acclaimed book on the subject, Gifted Origins to Graced Fulfilment-The Soteriology of Julian of Norwich; and Marilyn Kelleher, CGS, on the social work of the Good Samaritan Sisters in Sydney and Parramatta in the nineteenth century. Details on this and forthcoming colloquia are available from Dr. Sophie McGrath, RSM, WHTS Research Project Coordinator, Australian Catholic University, Locked Bag 2002, Strathfield NSW 2135.

Numerous papers relating to women religious over a wider range of periods and countries than the title might suggest, were presented at the symposium, “Brides of Christ: Towards a History of Women Religious in Britain and Ireland,” organized by Carmen Mangion and Caroline Bowden in October, 2002, at St. Mary’s College, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham. For a report and abstracts, contact the organizers at manwag@freeuk.com or by regular mail: Carmen Mangion, 491 Liverpool Road, Flat 7, London N7 8NS.

Research in Progress

Leslie Hughes is completing her doctoral thesis at the University of New South Wales in the field of women and philanthropy.

Caroline Bowden, Associate Research Fellow at the Centre for Religious History at St. Mary’s College, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, London, is developing a prosopographical research project on English and Irish convents in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Those interested in the topic may contact Caroline at cbowden@sas.ac.uk


Joan Mickelson Gaughan has undertaken a research project, at the invitation of the Sisters of St. Francis of Rochester, on the history of the College of St. Teresa, with an expected publication date of August, 2004.

Cindy Yik-yi Chu, assistant professor in the department of history at Hong Kong Baptist University, is engaged in research on the Maryknoll Sisters in Hong Kong. Her project focuses on the education, social
services and welfare which the women provided for the local people 1921-1969. An article highlighting parts of her larger topic, "From the Pursuit of Converts to the Relief of Refugees: The Maryknoll Sisters in Twentieth Century Hong Kong," appears in The Historian, December, 2002.

Ilana DeBare, a journalist in Oakland, California, is writing a book on the history of all-girl schools (K-12, not colleges) in the United States. She is currently working on the section on Catholic girls' schools.

Hildegard Pleva, a novice with a contemplative monastic community, Most Holy Redeemer (Redemptorists), is in the beginning stages of research on Maria Celeste Crostarosa (1696-1755), founder of the women's congregation and close friend of Alphonsus Ligouri who founded the Redemptorist priests' congregation.

Book Reviews


Anyone who has researched the role of Catholic women religious in the United States is acutely aware of their absence in the historical accounts of the church in America. Indeed, even in accounts of the history of Catholic education in which the Catholic nuns were for so long the sole teachers, they are frequently not even mentioned and certainly not credited with their success. Recent books such as Sisters in Arms by JoAnn McNamara, Spirited Lives by Coburn and Smith, Building Sisterhood by The Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters of Monroe, Michigan, among others, have certainly made fine contributions to the history of women religious. Happily, both books under review continue these recent beginnings in research and publication on the extensive history of American women religious.

The collected essays edited by Schier and Russett contain comprehensive information on women's colleges founded by religious from historical, sociological and ethnographical perspectives. The authors consistently place their topics into the larger context of church and society. The work is excellently re-searched and includes detailed references, along with two helpful appendices, the first of which lists the names of colleges and universities founded by women religious for the education of lay students, and a second which lists those founded for the education of sisters only. These appendices are useful to anyone doing further research. Unfortunately, compiler Thomas Landy did not include the dates of foundation in either case, data which would be useful to someone studying the topic.

The first two essays by Jill Ker Conway and Monika Hellwig put the topic in the context of the larger history of religious life as well as that of education of women. That there were 142 women's colleges and universities founded by nuns in 1968 attests to the ingenuity of women religious who managed to do this with no endowment other than their own lives and labor, and with little encouragement from church and society. Hellwig discusses the spirituality that underlay these endeavors and examines the five elements of celibacy, community, the vow of poverty, contemplation and charity, that made the sisters willing and ready to take on the ministry of higher education. (17)

Essays by Kathleen Mahoney on "Historical Origins," Thomas Landy on "College in Context," Karen Kennelly on "Faculties and What They Taught," Mary Oates on "The Sisterhoods and Catholic Education, 1890-1960," Dorothy Brown and Carol Green on the "Stories of Persistence and Success," and Melanie Morey on "The Present Relationship of Religious Women to the Colleges They Founded," focus primarily on different aspects of the history of these institutions up to the present. Interesting bits of information surface in their discussions, most of which reflect the climate of the time in church and society regarding women. For example, Bishop McQuaid of Rochester threatened the Catholic women who attended Cornell with excommunication if they did not withdraw from the University. He did not enjoin the same on Catholic men who studied there. (49-50)

Also we learn that many in the church, clergy and faithful alike, deemed the education women received at the numerous Catholic academies as sufficient education for women, making college education unnecessary. It was only when Catholic women in numbers enrolled in secular colleges that the church took notice, as Mary Oates notes in her essay. (163) And so did the nuns who geared up their expertise.
Though they had begun much later than the male religious in founding institutions of learning, they quickly caught up with their male counterparts, so much so that in the last one hundred years there have been at least 200 colleges founded by nuns to educate women, and more than half of the Catholic colleges and universities in America today were begun by sisters. (55) Most of these were established in the twentieth century, particularly from World War I to the 1960s, though some predated these years beginning in the late nineteenth century. There were trials, economic problems, struggles, and closures, but overall one can see from these essays that the women religious who entered into the apostolate of higher education were successful.

The remaining chapters of the book deal with remembrances of alumnae as told by Jane Redmont in her essay on “Live Mind, Yearning Spirits.” Redmont interviewed an ethnic and culturally diverse group of graduates of nine selected institutions. Her findings include the alumnae’s awareness of a commitment to the intellectual excellence of women, an emphasis on the life of the mind and its importance in the lives of Catholic women, and the planting and nurturing of their spiritual life. (196) One essay in this work focuses on student life at specific schools—three colleges founded in Philadelphia—to examine the similarities and differences of the three institutions founded by three different orders.

_Mundelein Voices_ complements Schier and Russett’s book in that it details the life and personalities of an individual college. Mundelein College which became a part of neighboring Loyola University in 1991, is commemorated in this volume mostly by memories of those who attended the college or served as faculty or administration. Although most of the authors are women alumnae, several essays by male faculty and administrators give a perspective that aptly reflects similar sentiments regarding the institution. The essays in Part I set the context for these remembrances first with an essay which tells the story of the founding of the college and a second on the building of its signature structure, the Skyscraper Building, now on the historic register. Part II presents a series of individual remembrances which though arranged chronologically do not comprise a history in the traditional sense. The stories recall each author’s initial encounter with Mundelein, her or his experiences with the religious faculty, the forming of friend-
political difficulties of that era. These chapters are preceded by a chronology and an introduction focusing on Shanghai with particular emphasis on World War II and the Sino-Japanese War as well as on the apostolic ministry of the Sisters in this pivotal city. A conclusion summarizes and evaluates the congregation’s achievements. Statistics are given for Sacred Heart Primary School, the Aurora Middle School for Girls, and Aurora College for Women, of which the author, a native of Shanghai, is a graduate.

Sacred Heart convent in Shanghai served as an internment camp from March to September, 1945, its 18 RSJC residents having been sent to Japan for safety. There is no indication that religious of other congregations were held there.

While this book does a good job describing the RSJC presence in China, reference to other missionary communities there during the same period might have enlarged the picture and facilitated a more nuanced interpretation of the significance of the Sisters’ China mission.

Pauline Grady, ASC
Springfield, Missouri

Announcements

The Second Annual Conference on the History of Women Religious of Britain and Ireland will convene in London, England, 11 October 2003. Submissions from all disciplines with an interest in the topic, for short papers, group sessions with chair, or contributions to workshops, should be sent in the form of abstracts of 250 words by Friday, 28 February 2003, to Dr. [Name]

Subscription Information

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News item for HWR News and Notes, Recent Publication, Research, Interests, etc.
The Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism at the University of Notre Dame will hold a conference entitled “Rethinking U.S. Catholicism: International and Comparative Frameworks,” March 14-15, 2003. For more information, contact the Center director, Timothy Matovina, at cushwa.1@nd.edu

The next conference of the Western Association of Women Historians is scheduled for June 6-8, 2003, at the Clark Kerr Conference Center, Berkeley. Information is regularly posted on the website www.wahw.org

The American Catholic Historical Association will hold its 84th annual meeting January 8-11, 2004, in Washington, D.C. For more information, contact program committee chair Professor Bernard McGinn, at bmcginn@midway.uchicago.edu