

WOMEN *& spirit*
CATHOLIC SISTERS IN AMERICA



DISCOVER A WORLD FEW HAVE SEEN,
BUT MILLIONS HAVE SHARED.

TOURING 2009-2012

Sponsored by Leadership Conference of Women Religious
in association with Cincinnati Museum Center



WOMEN & SPIRIT: CATHOLIC SISTERS IN AMERICA reveals the **mystery** behind a small group of **independent American women** who helped **shape the nation's** social and cultural landscape. First arriving in America nearly 300 years ago, throughout periods of struggle and controversy, sisters established schools, hospitals, and colleges, and provided other social services that have served millions. Through their enduring legacy and **persistent vision**, the nation's **promise of equality** and opportunity continues to be extended to all Americans, regardless of faith, color, nationality, or economic status.



Meet women who corresponded with President Thomas Jefferson, talked down bandits and roughnecks, lugged pianos into the wilderness, and provided the nation's first health insurance to Midwestern loggers. Discover sisters' **quiet courage** during many dramatic moments in U.S. history, including the Civil War, the Gold Rush, the San Francisco Earthquake, the Influenza Epidemic, the Civil Rights Movement, and Hurricane Katrina.

Welcome to

WOMEN & *spirit*
CATHOLIC SISTERS IN AMERICA

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PIONEER SPIRIT

The first sisters arrived in 1727. Within a short time, many women from Europe and the United States followed in their footsteps to serve frontier communities.

SLAVERY AND PREJUDICE

As sisters moved into fields of education, health care, and social service, they endured prejudice and encountered prejudice in themselves.



COURAGE AND CARE

Catholic sisters served during many of the nation's most devastating natural disasters, wars, and epidemics, often at considerable risk.

FOR COMMUNITY AND COUNTRY

As millions of immigrants sought to become Americans, sisters also arrived in greater numbers, leaving home and family to help others navigate the confusion and promise of America.

IT'S ELEMENTARY

Recognizing the power of education, sisters opened schools, orphanages, and colleges that served millions of Americans.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

During the 1960s and 1970s, the social upheaval which shook the country coupled with the renewal of Vatican Council II, deeply affected the sisters, transforming their lives. Peace and social justice became central to their mission.

NEW FRONTIERS

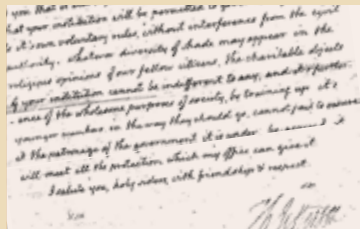
Although fewer in number, American Catholic sisters continue to address issues of global concern, including climate change, poverty, and human rights.





KEY ARTIFACTS

PIONEER SPIRIT



- Letter from President Thomas Jefferson to Sister Therese de St. Xavier Farjon, OSU, dated May 15, 1804
- Diary of Sister Clare Joseph Dickinson, OCD, recounting her cross-Atlantic journey in 1790 to help start the first community in the nation's original thirteen states
- Shoe crafted from braided corn husks and worn by pioneer sisters

PREJUDICE WITHIN AND WITHOUT



- Charred altar missal from a convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts, burned to the ground in an outbreak of anti-Catholic fervor
- Student work from the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first all black community
- Document requesting forgiveness for past involvement in slavery from communities in Kentucky

COURAGE AND CARE



- Nurse's bag used during the Civil War by Sister Anthony O'Connell, SC. Catholic sisters were instrumental in nursing soldiers on both sides of the conflict.

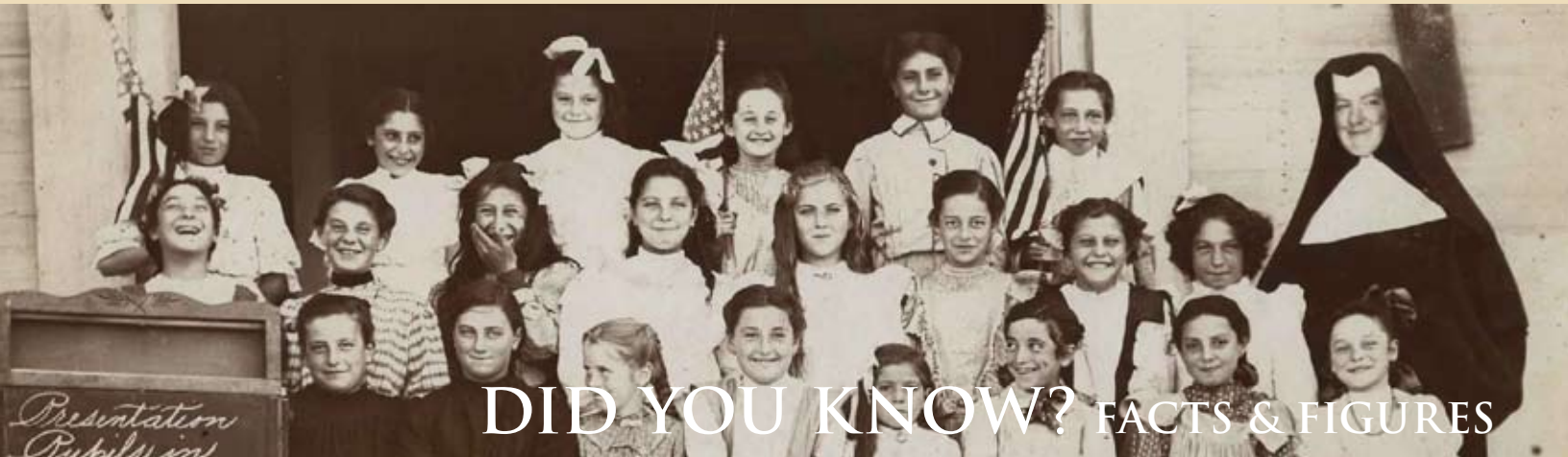
COMMUNITY AND NATION BUILDING



- Pewter mortar and pestle honoring Sister Xavier Hebert, OSU, America's first woman pharmacist (replica, 1985)
- First medical license given to a woman in New Mexico, issued to Sister Mary de Sales Lehene, SC, in 1901
- Infant Incubator, based on a prototype made by Sister Pulcheria Wuellner, OSF, from a cigar humidor in 1938

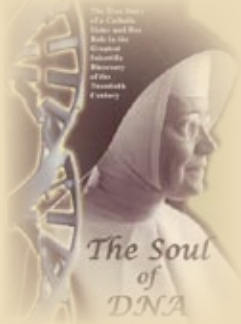
NEW FRONTIERS

- Shirt belonging to Sister Dorothy Kazel, OSU, murdered in El Salvador December 2, 1980



DID YOU KNOW? FACTS & FIGURES

INNOVATIONS IN HEALTHCARE



- Today, approximately one in six U.S. hospital patients is cared for in a Catholic facility.
- During its founding, Alcoholics Anonymous received vital support from Sister Ignatia Gavin, CSA, who successfully advocated that alcoholism be treated as a medical condition.
- More than 600 sisters from 21 different communities nursed both Union and Confederate soldiers during the Civil War.
- Pioneering research in infrared spectrography by Sister Miriam Stimson, OP, supported the discovery of DNA.

LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

- The Catholic school system is the largest private school system in the world.
- More than 110 U.S. colleges and universities were founded by Catholic sisters.
- The first American-born saint, Elizabeth Ann Seton, SC, founder of Sisters of Charity, was a mother and widow who established the nation's first free Catholic school.

BREAKTHROUGHS IN SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Since 1980, nine American sisters have been murdered while working for social justice and human rights overseas.
- Since 1995, numerous congregations have participated as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) at the United Nations, focusing on global issues such as climate change, human trafficking, and poverty.





EXHIBIT SPECIFICATIONS

The exhibit opens in Spring 2009 and will travel nationwide for a 3-year tour. The flexible exhibit plan accommodates a wide variety of venues, from 2,500 to 3,500 square feet, with potential for expansion. At each venue, exhibitors will have a chance to emphasize stories relevant to their region. Interactive kiosks and special artifact cases are among the techniques for customizing the exhibit for specific institutions.

OBJECTS AND ARTIFACTS

Artifacts and ephemera collected and on loan from more than 400 sister communities include traveling trunks, journals of immigration experiences, pioneering healthcare devices, diaries, letters, student work, and items associated with a number of saints. A total of 50 to 60 objects will be displayed at each venue, with the potential for additional objects to provide a regional emphasis.

SUPPORTING PROGRAMS

- Educational outreach package and curriculum
- Enhanced web site and interactive media
- Catalog of books, videos, and films available for special programs
- Extensive network of community support for special events and local marketing opportunities

EXHIBIT DESIGN

The exhibit is based on a modular system composed of rich content printed on birch walls and enhanced by interpretive media. It showcases a wealth of stunning photographs and rare artifacts carefully presented with environmentally controlled cases and appropriate lighting fixtures.

AUDIO-VISUAL COMPONENTS

Media components include an introductory video projection experience, oral history listening stations, touchscreen interactives, and smaller videos which showcase historical footage.





WOMEN & SPIRIT: CATHOLIC SISTERS IN AMERICA is organized by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), an association of leaders of congregations of Catholic women religious in the United States. LCWR represents about 95 percent of the women religious in the United States.

To insure that “Women & Spirit” fulfills expectations of museum visitors and academics alike, LCWR has assembled an expert advisory panel of scholars, historians, and museum and design professionals. These advisors will continue to be consulted on current scholarship, bibliography, and historical accuracy throughout the design development process. In addition, LCWR has assembled a committee of sister leaders to oversee and administer the exhibit.

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“From the time the Ursulines arrived in New Orleans in 1727 up to today, women religious have made an incalculable contribution to this nation. Running schools, hospitals and orphanages from America’s earliest days, these women helped foster a culture of social service that has permeated our society. Over the centuries these courageous women overcame many obstacles—both physical and cultural—to bring their civilizing and caring influence to every corner of the country. Understanding and celebrating the history of women religious is essential to understanding and celebrating the history of America.”

—Cokie Roberts, news analyst and author