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Royal BC Museum and Sisters of St. Ann Preserve BC History with Unique Partnership

Victoria, BC – In an effort to preserve a vital part of BC’s history, the Sisters of St. Ann are placing their important collection of historic artifacts, religious objects and documents dating back to 1858 under the stewardship of the Royal BC Museum.

Under an agreement announced today, more than more than 100,000 photographs, 500 pieces of art, 250 metres of documents (over a million archival records) and over 1,000 artifacts chronicling the Sisters’ pioneering work in British Columbia, the Yukon and Alaska will move to the Royal BC Museum where they will be available for research and exhibition.

“We are extremely pleased to work with the Sisters of St. Ann to provide a new permanent home for their important artifacts and records, ensuring they are preserved and accessible for the future.” said Pauline Rafferty, CEO of the Royal BC Museum. “The Sisters of St. Ann’s have had an enormous impact on the story of British Columbia; this collection offers true insight into the early days of the province.”

The Sisters of St. Ann have made a significant contribution to the life and development of BC and the west. These pioneering women opened 13 schools, nine hospitals and one nursing school in Victoria, Duncan, Nanaimo, Campbell River, New Westminster, Vancouver, Kamloops, Oliver, Smithers, Prince George, Nelson, Dawson City (YT), Juneau (AK), and Douglas (AK), as well as numerous parochial schools.

“Throughout our 154 year history in British Columbia and other areas of the Pacific Northwest we, the Sisters of St. Ann, have carefully preserved the records of our lives and the works we established to serve the people of this region,” Says Sister Marie Zarowny, Province Leader of the Sisters of St. Ann. “We did so for their historic, artistic and educational value as well as to honour the Sisters and all those who worked with us. We now entrust these precious records to the museum and archives, ensuring they will continue to be available to future generations.”

Under this agreement, the Sisters will pay all costs for maintaining the archives until 2027, including the salary of their archivists who will work on site at the Royal BC Museum and advise Royal BC Museum archivists and curators.

The collection includes liturgical objects used during mass, large hand-carved rosaries worn by the Sisters, a Victorian-era autograph book owned by Edith “Dollie” Helmcken, and an historic religious book presented to the Sisters by Bishop Modeste Demers upon their arrival in the West in 1858.

Other significant items include archival photographs, vintage textiles, documents, and letters that help to tell the remarkable story of the Sisters of St. Ann in British Columbia.

“These objects add to our collection and are extremely important to the ongoing study, understanding and presentation of the BC story stretching back to its earliest days of settlement and development,” said Gary Mitchell, Director of Collections, Research and Access Services at the Royal BC Museum.

About the Royal BC Museum

As the provincial museum and archives, the Royal BC Museum preserves and shares the stories of British Columbia – on-site, off-site and online – through its research, collections, exhibitions, publications and educational programs. Its two-hectare cultural precinct in Victoria also includes a number of historically significant buildings and First Nations sites; and its seasonal satellite museum gallery in Vancouver showcases BC’s history in one of the oldest buildings in Chinatown – Wing Sang.

For more information about the Royal BC Museum, visit www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca or call 1-888-447-7977.

NOTE TO EDITORS: Images of artifacts and archival photographs of the Sisters of St. Ann’s work in communities across BC, the Yukon and Alaska are available at news@royalbcmuseum.bc.ca.

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