

Immaculate Conception Novitiate Records
CMS.064
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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Center for Migration Studies
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307 E. 60th Street
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Summary Information

Repository	Center for Migration Studies
Title	Immaculate Conception Novitiate, Cornwall, New York, Records
Date	1934-1972
Extent	2.0 document boxes
Location note	CMS.064 is housed at the Provincial House of the Saint Charles Province of the Society of Saint Charles-Scalabrinians, 27 Carmine Street, New York, New York, 10014.
Language	English
Abstract	CMS.064 documents activities at a property in Cornwall, New York, in Orange County fifty miles north of New York City. From 1960 to 1972 the property belonged to the Society of Saint Charles-Scalabrinians, a congregation of male religious. It served as the local province's novitiate through the 1960s and as a retreat center from 1969 to 1972. The collection consists of photographs and a scrapbook documenting the early years of the novitiate, a folder of vocational literature that documents the types of retreats held at the retreat center, and a folder of miscellaneous materials gathered when the Scalabrinians sold the property.

Preferred Citation note

The preferred citation is Center for Migration Studies of New York; Immaculate Conception Novitiate records (CMS.064); Box; Folder.

Biographical/Historical note

The property used as Immaculate Conception Novitiate first appeared on a map in 1684, when Scots-born Patrick McGregor purchased it from local Indians. A record of continuous ownership begins in 1861 when the owner, Martha Clark, leased land to Charles and Pamela Elizabeth Stillman. Charles (1810-1875) was born in Connecticut to a family with colonial roots and went west to Texas to found the town of Brownsville and a family fortune. In 1879 he and his wife were able to purchase the property in Cornwall, tear down the farmhouse they had found on it, and build a mansion for themselves and their children.

Charles and Pamela had one son, James Jewett Stilman (1850-1918) and three daughters: Isabelle (Bell), Elizabeth (Bessie) and Clara. Bell predeceased her mother, who died in 1910, upon which Bessie and Clara inherited the Charles Stillman property and continued to alternate between it and a New York City home. When the last of the sisters died in 1935, the will bequeathed the house to Elizabeth Goodrich Stillman Williams, whose great-grandfather was their father Charles, whose grandfather was their brother James Jewett and whose father was James Jewett's middle son Charles Chauncey. Elizabeth was already married at the time she inherited the house, to Langbourne Meade Williams of Virginia, and the couple leased the house to tenants.

Elizabeth Goodrich Stillman Williams died in 1956 and bequeathed the house to her brother Chauncey Devereux. Chauncey had converted to Catholicism in 1952, and the objects of his philanthropy were Catholic ones. Interested in both Catholicism and in rural life (his own home, Wethersfield, in Dutchess County, was preserved as an example of a rural estate) he met Monsignor Luigi Gino Ligutti of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference. Interested in both rural matters and in Italian-American affairs, Monsignor Ligutti introduced Chauncey to the Society of Saint Charles-Scalabrinians, and Chauncey donated the Kenridge property to them in 1960. In 1983, the Saint Charles Province of the Society of Saint Charles-Scalabrinians sold the property to the Jesuit Fathers, who used it for Jogues' Retreat Center.

Scope and Contents note

CMS.064 consists of materials collected at property historically known as Kenridge in Cornwall, Orange County, New York, between 1960 and 1972. During those years the property belonged to the Saint Charles Province of the Society of Saint Charles-Scalabrinians, a congregation of male religious. The Scalabrini Fathers had been organized in 1887 to minister to migrants in transit and in their new homes. They called it Immaculate Conception.

The Photograph Series of CMS.064 documents life at Immaculate Conception from 1960 to 1962, the first years that it served as a novitiate, or an educational institution for the Scalabrinians' newest members. The Series consists of photograph albums and scrapbooks. One album consists of 7x10" black-

and-white glossy photographs taken September 8, 1960, during the dedication of the building and the investiture of the first class of novices. Two more photographs contain candid snapshots of the novices. A final scrapbook contains cards and ephemera generated during the early classes under the leadership of Novitiate Superior Gino M. Dalpiaz.

Intertwined forces led to the closing of Immaculate Conception Novitiate. First, there was a change in the demography of Scalabrini vocations. The Scalabrini Fathers had been founded in 1887 and had begun their ministry among their compatriots, Italian migrants. They moved into Immaculate Conception with the intention of recruiting the American sons of Italian immigrants to provide pastoral care for subsequent generations of the ethnic community. However, the Italian-American community had reached a stage in assimilation in which the priesthood was among many vocations a young man could choose, and the number of recruits began to decline. Also, during Vatican II the Scalabrini Fathers, like other congregations of religious, re-examined their history. They recovered founder Giovanni Battista Scalabrini's interest in all migrants, expanded their mission to other ethnic groups, and attracted vocation from among the young men of these new groups. These new recruits, though, would not be trained at Kenridge. Another part of Vatican II was a re-examination of seminary training. The Scalabrini Fathers opened new kinds of educational institutions in other parts of the Americas rather than continuing the model in practice at Immaculate Conception.

In the 1970s, the Scalabrinians repurposed Immaculate Conception as a retreat center. The retreat center maintained one link with its past as a novitiate in that it offered retreats for young men discerning vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and its administrator, Father Edward M. Marino, c.s. (1931-2011) had some experience cultivating vocations. The Vocational Literature Series documents this particular activity at Immaculate Conception during the years 1970-1972.

Retreat centers were a competitive field in the late twentieth century, and the Scalabrinians were at a disadvantage compared to orders with a tradition of leading retreats. Also, Immaculate Conception had the defect of its virtue: it was in a beautiful natural setting, the rural isolation of which made it hard to reach. The Scalabrini Fathers sold the property in 1983 and it became the Jesuit Fathers Jogues' Retreat Center. During the process of clearing out the house, miscellaneous items such as a program for benefits, yearbooks of student activities and a photograph of a 1934 ceremony at the Scalabrini Fathers' motherhouse in Piacenza, Italy, surfaced. These comprise the Miscellaneous Series in this collection.

Arrangement note

CMS064 is arranged in three Series:

Series I: Photographs

Series II: Vocational Literature

Series III: Miscellaneous Documents

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Center for Migration Studies March 1987

Conditions Governing Access note

CMS.064 is available to researchers by appointment.

Conditions Governing Use note

Please consult the Center for Migration Studies for permission to publish material from CMS.064.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

The Center for Migration Studies acquired the contents of CMS.064 from Immaculate Conception Retreat Center at Kenridge, Cornwall, New York, in the 1980s.

Processing Information note

Nicholas J. Falco processed CMS.064 in March 1987, soon after the arrival of the Immaculate Conception Novitiate Records at the Center for Migration Studies at 209 Flagg Place, Staten Island, New York, 10314. In 2009 CMS moved to 27 Carmine Street, New York, New York, 10014, and CMS.064 was put on shelves in the basement there. In 2017 the finding aid was inputted into Archivists' Toolkit using the prescriptions in "Describing Archives: A Content Standard."

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

CMS.063 and CMS.063A contains the Saint Charles Seminary Records, the institution to which the novices at Immaculate Conception Novitiate went upon the completion of their year-long program at Immaculate Conception.

CMS.064A is an addendum to the Immaculate Conception Novitiate Records.

CMS.078C contains the papers of the Provincial government, which was responsible for the property at Kenridge and for activities there.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Scalabrinians.

Geographic Name(s)

- Cornwall (N. Y.)
- Staten Island (New York, N. Y.)

Personal Name(s)

- Dalpiaz, Gino M., c.s., (Rev.)
- Marino, Edward M., c.s., (Rev.), 1931-2005

Subject(s)

- Catholic theological seminaries
- Italian Americans |x Religion

Photograph Albums and Scrapbook

Collection Inventory

Photograph Albums and Scrapbook		
	Bin	Folder
Photographs of dedication and first investiture at Immaculate Conception Novitiate, Cornwall, New York 8 September 1960	1	1
	Box	Folder
Photograph album of the Class of 1961 1960-1961	1	2
Photograph album, probably of the Class of 1962 1961-1962	1	3
Scrapbook assembled by Superior of the Novitiate, Father Gino M. Dalpiaz 1960-1961	1	4
Vocational Literature 1970-1972	Box	Folder
	2	1
Miscellaneous Documents 1934-1965	Box	Folder
	2	2