2017 REPORT OF THE ARCHIVIST

The files of the diocesan archives were utilized to a great extent this year. Many researchers discovered that the archives hold a comprehensive and noteworthy collection of materials that are easily accessible. Archival projects varied tremendously and uncovered many interesting facts about our diocesan history.

On November 4, 2017, a dedicated walking group gathered together to carry a very special Veil from Trinity Episcopal Church, Shamokin, to its new home at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church in Mt. Carmel. The Veil was a key piece of Trinity’s rich history. In 1977, a vision of Christ’s face was seen on the Veil and, consequently, thousands of people from around the world visited Trinity Church to pray and to meditate before the Veil. Through the leadership of The Rev. Cn. Dan Morrow, Diocesan Canon for Congregational Life & Mission, a service was conducted in St. Mary’s Chapel at Trinity Church followed immediately by a seven mile walking journey to Mt. Carmel. During the walk, the Veil was carried by various members of the group and occasional stops were made for prayer and reflection. The Veil arrived safely at its destination and will be devotedly cared for by the parishioners of Mt. Carmel. The story of the Veil will continue to be a cherished part of our diocesan history.

In the spring of 2018, several members of the Questers, Falling Spring Chapter of Fayetteville, Pennsylvania, conducted an investigation into the history of a small white cross that stood in the churchyard of historic Emmanuel Chapel in Mt. Alto. The original intent of the researchers was to restore the damaged cross to its original condition. During the removal of the damaged cross, a small amount of human remains and a brass plaque were discovered. A search was conducted into the history of the plaque, inscribed: T. Edgar Boy, and into the circumstances surrounding his burial in the churchyard. This investigation produced a surprising amount of historical material about the Chapel in Mt. Alto. On May 25, 2018, a service to celebrate the restoration of the cross was held at the Chapel. After the service in the Chapel, a moment of silence and remembrance was offered around the new cross in the churchyard. The Quester’s research brought a lost moment of history to life and uncovered the moving story of a now silent family of worshippers at the small chapel in Mt. Alto.

A project to document diocesan programs that related to the issue of eliminating racism was conducted in the spring of 2018. The archives and diocesan journals were searched from 1983 to the present to gather precise information about diocesan actions to address the evils of racism. The research resulted in the preparation of a timeline that included data about diocesan seminars, commissions and projects that were previously offered throughout the diocese. The investigation into this issue is ongoing and will continue to uncover historical and vital information that will aid the diocese in establishing new programs to eliminate racism.

Many genealogy requests were made to the diocesan archives during the past year. One genealogy request resulted in a road trip to Christ Church in York Springs. The genealogy research concerned a parishioner who was buried in the original church cemetery which was located in a wooded plot along White Church Road, York Springs (Christ Church moved from this spot to an area closer to town in the late 1800’s). The plot on White Church Road which contained the original church cemetery and is presently maintained under the direction of The Rev. Herb Sprouse, Rector of The Memorial Church of the Prince in Gettysburg. As a result of this genealogy research, the diocesan archives collected historical information and current photographs that were added to the Christ Church archive files.

The past year also included participation in an all-day seminar presented by the Pennsylvania State Archives. The seminar focused on the topic of archival disaster planning. Preplanning and cleanup after a disaster were discussed as well as the issue of archival restoration of damaged artifacts and files. Several helpful contacts were established to assist the diocese in the aftermath of a disaster situation. A disaster plan document for the archives is currently being created.
The diocese continued to work on the digitization of important archival documents. The digitization of Diocesan Journals from 1900 to the present was completed and work is currently underway to provide access to this information. Digitization will be an ongoing process as vital documents are identified and processed. Due to the fact that the majority of archive documents are categorized and filed in paper form, most researchers are invited to visit the diocesan office to conduct their searches.

As a final note, historical documents were provided for the diocesan website's “Trivia Thursday” posting. Trivia Thursday provided an opportunity for the diocesan archives to uncover some fun and intriguing information about, but not limited to, our churches, rectors, parishioners and events. Every Thursday, a photograph or document was posted and users were invited to identify the image. This posting resulted in a wonderful, and sometimes humorous, string of on-line conversations. In addition to the engaging communication between users, the posting also provided a glimpse into the rich historical past of our diocese and the importance of preserving that history.

The work of the archivist would not be possible without the assistance of the diocesan staff. The entire diocesan staff strives to operate collegially and effectively so that each staff member is assisted in accomplishing their individual goals and responsibilities. I am grateful for the support and interest that is given to the work of the archives and look forward to creating and achieving new goals in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah A. Robelen, Diocesan Archivist