



STONE

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CORNER

The Archives

The archives of a religious congregation are an important part of its legacy. The many documents, letters, diaries, publications, and artifacts tell the story of a congregation from its founding to the present. To make materials accessible to researchers, both professional and amateur, studying religious life, both history and charism requires these materials to be handled in a consistent fashion and maintained by trained personnel. For small congregations, including the Ursuline of Brown County, maintaining their own archives is cost prohibitive and limits the potential for research.

We have been fortunate to join with 40 other religious congregations in establishing the Women Religious Archives Collaborative (WRAC) in Cleveland, Ohio. The collaborative allows religious congregations to preserve the legacy of women religious in the United States. The Heritage Center, in the planning stages, is scheduled to open the new facility in the spring of 2026.



Like all religious communities, The Brown County Ursulines hold a variety of documents in what we call the archives. These artifacts trace our story back to the beginning when Julia Chatfield and her companions emigrated from France and settled in the wilderness of Brown County, Ohio. Our archival materials include both physical artifacts such as art, woodwork, pottery, and recorded information such as handwritten, Diaries, ledgers, personal notes, publications,

pictures, members records, property and building information. There is an amazing amount of history in the documents and artifacts.

Because we value these artifacts as our legacy to current and future students, we are in the process of examining our collections and developing a plan to preserve and provide access to our story.



In our collection are diaries, also handwritten, which recount our history from before the Foundresses departed France in 1845. The diaries are being transcribed with a view toward creating a digital record which makes them more accessible. Over the years community committees and groups created working files with a variety of entries from correspondence to legal documents to invitations, to program plans. These files are being reviewed and organized. This phase will be followed with a subject matter grouping of files and cataloguing. This work is time consuming and requires dedication from a curious mind, organizational skills, perseverance, and love of the subject matter.

The Ursulines of Brown County have had several capable members who, over the years, contributed to our archival history. From Sister Gonzaga in the early 1900's to Sisters Xavier, Mary Paul, Roseanne, and Debbie and lay volunteers during more recent times.

Members of the Alumnae Association from the School of the Brown County Ursulines have spent the last year managing the materials preserved from the Boarding School. They have created displays of graduation pictures, concert and theatrical programs, candid photos and favorite activities, complete with a display of the school uniform.

In addition to the artifacts from the boarding school the artworks done by the Ursuline Sisters, some pieces going back as far as Julia Chatfield and the original sisters from France. We are gifted with paintings, pottery, wood carvings, poetry, manuscripts, quilts and furniture from former days.

We are fortunate to be housing and displaying these artifacts in the former Chatfield College Father Kammerer Library and Learning Center.



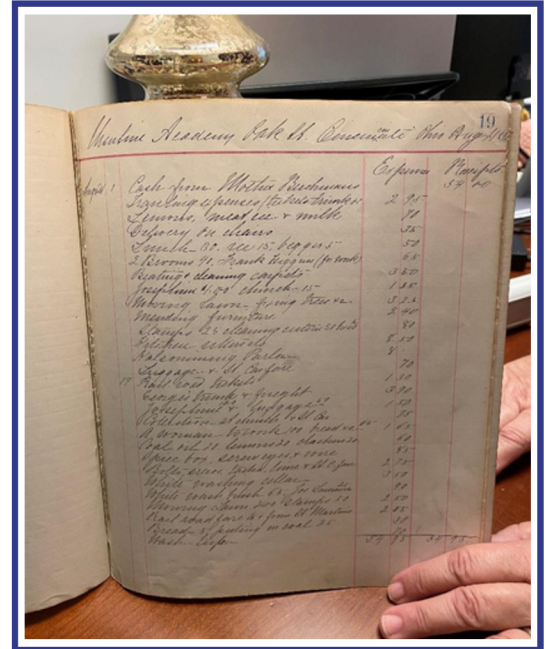
We are able to provide tours for a variety of groups including Ursuline Academy Sophomores, board of trustees and new faculty and staff members. We have also provided tours for the Brown County Historic Society, Western Brown County District "Steamology" educational program for teachers of gifted students, Brown County Alumnae Association Reunion and the Chatfield Edge Car, Quilt and Craft event.



At Ursuline Academy, archive work is being done by Sr. Phyllis Kemper with Shirley Speaks who has a 30-year history with UA. Sr. Phyllis describes the work in these terms: “working in an archive is like putting together a very large jigsaw puzzle. There are many pieces that are connected to one another, and the challenge is finding how they fit together. The UA jigsaw puzzle was created in 1896, and only recently started to be put together.

One of the exciting things we have found includes the first financial ledger for the school. In September 1896, the first entry was the deposit of \$54 sent from Brown County as seed money for the school. Sometimes we find newspaper clippings with no date or source. It takes a little detective work to determine at least when it might have been written.

One of the articles found describes the opening of Ursuline Academy on Oak and May streets. It reads: *“The Ursuline sisters of Brown County, whose 50 years of usefulness have endeared them to several generations of loving hearts, have determined to extend their mission by opening a day school in the city of Cincinnati. The new school, both in its mission and in its location, will fill a long felt want.”*



The ability to gather information into the stories of the lives and times of the members, institutions, friends, and students paints a rich picture of our Ursuline Legacy.

The Future of St. Martin Campus



The Chatfield Edge has announced it is taking another important step in its growth as a nonprofit organization. At the end of October, the 99-acre campus in St. Martin, Ohio was sold. Proceeds from the sale are being invested in The Chatfield Edge endowment, reinforcing the commitment to the mission well into the future.

This sale ushers in a new era of community use for this historic site. The Chatfield Edge will continue its work on the St. Martin campus as one of several organizations on the property offering essential services to students and the broader community.



Future Plans, Inc., a nonprofit organization focused on providing recovery, wellness, and workforce development services to women and their children in Appalachia, Ohio, is now the official owner of the property. It will serve as a hub for much-needed support and resources to individuals throughout the region. It was important for the Chatfield Edge Board to find an organization with an aligned purpose, shared values, and respect for the wonderful work of the Ursulines that began in 1845.

Ursulines of Brown County

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The manger scene was designed by Sister Agatha Fitzgerald. An experience of the caves near Bethlehem by Sister Phyllis Kemper on her pilgrimage to the Holy Land may invite your imagination to prayerful reflection. The first tour in the Holy Land was Shepherds' Fields, a little less than two miles from Bethlehem. Located at the top of a high hill, the site looked over a valley and across to another set of hills where we had seen Bedouin shepherds. For over 21 centuries these hills have fed sheep.

"As I walked down a couple of steps into the cave, I was overcome with reverence and awe. As I looked at the blackened ceiling, I could tell that many a fire kept shepherds warm from the cold night air. The dirt floor was packed with years, perhaps centuries of hay. Why did this cave feel like such a sacred space? Could this be the actual hillside where shepherds on night watch saw the Christmas star? Could this be the cave where the other shepherds rested on that first Christmas night?"

May you find the dwelling of God within during this holy season.

Christmas Blessings

The Ursulines of Brown County