



Press Release

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Women Religious Archives Collaborative to Break Ground on New Heritage Center to Preserve and Share the History of Catholic Sisters

(CLEVELAND, OH — July 14, 2025) The Women Religious Archives Collaborative (WRAC) is pleased to announce that it will break ground on a new heritage center on July 22, 2025. This state-of-the-art facility will preserve the history of Catholic sisters and share the stories of their enormous contributions and impact throughout the United States.

WRAC, incorporated in 2022, is a nonprofit organization bringing together more than 40 congregations of Catholic sisters from across the United States and Canada to build one of four collaborative repositories in the country to hold the archives of Catholic sisters.

Led by Sister Susan Durkin, an Ursuline Sister of Cleveland, WRAC is addressing an urgent need among aging congregations of sisters seeking a permanent home for their archives and ways to share their stories with researchers and future generations. Without a place to preserve these archives, the immense contributions of Catholic sisters over centuries in healthcare, education, social service, and advocating for social justice and civil rights are at risk of being lost.

Catholic Sisters have been vital to the history of our country and the Catholic Church since they first arrived in the United States in 1727. These intrepid women established schools, hospitals, and social service ministries, many of which continue today. They are the educators, nurses, doctors, CEOs, lawyers, advocates, and inventors who helped build the infrastructure of our communities.

The heritage center will be located at 2490 E. 22nd Street in Cleveland's Central Neighborhood, an area of the city where sisters have served since 1865. The 30,000 square foot facility is slated to open in Spring 2027. It will include a 16,000 square foot temperature-controlled vault with capacity to hold the archival collections of over 75 congregations of Catholic sisters, as well as space for processing, digitization, research, dynamic public programming, exhibitions, and meetings.

The building was designed by Bostwick Design Partnership and will be constructed by Regency Construction Services, Inc. WRAC looks forward to the center being an asset to the Cleveland community. It will contribute to Cleveland's architectural beauty and the development of E. 22nd Street with its striking and welcoming design. In addition to being a vibrant local presence, its central location and virtual exhibits and programs will facilitate visits from scholars, researchers, and genealogists throughout the country. WRAC plans for the center to be an education destination, welcoming visitors and students to learn about the lives, mission, and work of sisters.



WRAC has raised over \$19 million towards its \$24 million goal to build the heritage center. Funding for the building has primarily been contributed by the participating congregations of Catholic sisters. WRAC is continuing to fundraise for the center and invites the public to fill its funding gap and join Catholic sisters from across the United States in building a permanent home for their archives to ensure that their stories of faith and service are shared into the future.

Sister Susan Durkin, OSU shared about the significance of the future heritage center. “Catholic Sisters have spent their lives in service to others. Their tremendous contributions have often gone unnoticed but have lifted up and made positive and lasting change in the communities where they served. This heritage center will become a space where current and future generations from around the world will be able to learn about the role of faith and service, women’s leadership, and the power of community to make meaningful change to better our world.”

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About Women Religious Archives Collaborative (WRAC). Established in 2022, WRAC is a 501(c)3 independent, nonprofit organization based in Cleveland, OH. Its mission is to preserve the legacy of women religious in the United States. To accomplish its mission, WRAC is working to: provide advice and guidance to women religious without plans for their archives; establish a heritage center, which will be a permanent home for the archives of more than 40 congregations open to the public for research, programming, and presentations in person and online; and educate the public about the history of Catholic sisters.

To learn more about WRAC visit <https://archivescollaborative.org>.