

## **Irma Corcoran, BVM, Papers, 1876-2000**

**Creator:** Corcoran, Irma, B.V.M. (1905-2000)

**Extent:** 8 linear ft.

**Processor:** Cheryl Lemus, Adrienne Sage 12 April 2001

**Updated by:** K. Young, 5 November 2001

### **Administration Information**

**Access Restrictions:** Restriction placed on the contents in Box 13. Access to these materials, including the original manuscript materials of the *ABC Zoo*, requires permission from Mary Alma Sullivan, B.V.M.

**Usage Restrictions:** Copyright of Irma Corcoran, BVM, Papers is owned by the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM's), Dubuque, Iowa.

**Preferred Citation:** Loyola University of Chicago. Women and Leadership Archives. Irma Corcoran, BVM Papers. Box #. Folder #.

**Provenance:** The Sr. Irma Corcoran, B.V.M., papers were donated to the Women and Leadership Archives by Sr. Irma Corcoran on December 1, 1996, November 21, 1997, and April 12, 1999. Mary Alma Sullivan, B.V.M., donated the final addition to these papers on August 25, 2000, after Sr. Irma's death.

**Separations:** 4 inches of duplicate material discarded.

**See Also:** Mundelein College Oral History Project. Sr. Irma was interviewed several times for this project. Audiocassette tapes and transcripts are available for interviews conducted in 1993, 1996, and 1997.

### **Biography**

Wilma Abigail Corcoran, born on November 10, 1905, was the eldest of two daughters of Augustine D. Corcoran, a noted archaeologist, and his wife, Anna Conmey Corcoran, of Anamosa, Iowa. After graduating from Anamosa High School in 1923, Wilma attended Clarke College, formerly Mount St. Joseph College, in Dubuque, Iowa, graduating in 1927 with a Baccalaureate of Art in English. The following year, 1928, she entered the order of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (B.V.M.), taking the name Sister Mary Irma. Continuing her education, Sr. Irma received a Master of Arts degree in 1931 from Columbia University, New York, where she specialized in the English Renaissance, and in 1945 she received her Ph.D. in English from Catholic University of America. She attended various summer sessions at Columbia University in 1937; the Bread Loaf School of English in 1948, to which she received an Atlantic Monthly scholarship; and summer courses on History, Literature, and the Arts of Seventeenth-century England at the University of Oxford in 1962. Her areas of expertise were diverse, covering the English Renaissance, Milton, Chaucer, Old English Literature, and Delaware Valley colonial history.

Sr. Irma's professional career was as diverse as her academic interests. From 1930 to 1972 she was a professor of English at Mundelein College, and served as the advisor for literary

publications at Mundelein for twenty years. In 1946 she was an exchange professor at Clarke College, and from 1957 to 1961 she taught in the Catholic University of America summer Master's program at both the Mid-west branch and the Washington, D.C., campus. The summer of 1968 saw Sr. Irma participating as a teacher in Florida A & M University's Upward Bound program. After retiring from Mundelein College in 1972, she taught speech and drama at St. Agatha elementary school. In 1974 Sr. Irma started working at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, preparing the papers of William Penn for microfilm; in 1978 she completed the index of film for these papers. From 1975 to 1980 Sr. Irma worked at the American Philosophical Society as an assistant to the Manuscript Librarian. Throughout her career Sr. Irma gave numerous lectures and presentations at various schools and conferences including the Philadelphia Numismatic and Antiquarian Society and the Central Renaissance Conference. Her experience as a B.V.M. included the Freedom March in Montgomery, Alabama, assisting contract buyers in Lawndale, and collecting clothing for the poor.

In addition to being a respected scholar and researcher, Sr. Irma was a prolific author and poet. Three of her best known works are her Ph.D. dissertation *Milton's Paradise With Reference to the Hexameral Background*, first published in 1945 and reissued in 1968; *ABC Zoo*, a Braille book of verse for blind children, published in 1983; and *Thomas Holme: 1624-1695 Surveyor General of Pennsylvania*, which won the 1992 John Frederick Lewis Award from the American Philosophical Society. In addition to these works, Sr. Irma published many articles, book reviews, and poems. Her articles on Milton, Herrick, Traherne, Herbert, and Crashaw appeared in the *Catholic Youth Encyclopedia*, her book reviews appeared in *The Critic*, and her poems appeared in such publications as *America*, *Commonweal*, *North American Review*, *Shards*, *Sign*, *Spirit*, the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, and the *Washington Post*.

Sr. Irma Corcoran passed away on February 23, 2000, at the age of 95. She is survived by several cousins and her B.V.M. family.

### **Scope and Content**

The Irma Corcoran, B.V.M. papers span the period 1926 to 2000 and consists of eleven archival boxes and two oversize boxes. There are seven series in this collection: Biographical Information, Education, Correspondence, Professional, Thomas Holme, Other Writings, and Restricted. All series are arranged chronologically; series 6 is also arranged alphabetically.

**Series 1: Biographical Information, 1876-2000, n.d., Boxes 1-4**, includes copies of Sr. Irma's baptismal record and census records; faculty records; newspaper clippings; lists of publications and awards; photographs; and calendars and diaries.

**Series 2: Education, 1926-1962, n.d., Boxes 5-6**, includes academic records, Sr. Irma's Ph.D. dissertation and dissertation research materials, commencement information, and diplomas. The diplomas are contained in an oversize box.

**Series 3: Correspondence, 1934-2000, n.d., Boxes 5 & 7**, is arranged chronologically by subject. Subjects include correspondence to parents; general correspondence received and sent; and correspondence with Cecilia Bodman; the B.V.M. community; Mary Alma Sullivan; Carol

Madden Adjoran; and various scholars.

**Series 4: Professional, 1948-1981, n.d., Box 8**, consists of materials from Sr. Irma's professional activities. These activities include participation in the Upward Bound program, the American Philosophical Association, the Historical Society of Philadelphia, and St. Agatha School. This series also includes various certificates and awards received by Sr. Corcoran.

**Series 5: Thomas Holme, 1961-1993, n.d., Box 9**, consists of materials for Sr. Irma's award winning book *Thomas Holme: 1624-1695 Surveyor General of Pennsylvania*. Research materials include correspondence and grant applications; permission forms, agreements, and payments; awards, correspondence, articles and press releases; book reviews; and photographs. This series also includes an autographed copy of the book.

**Series 6: Other Writings, 1937-1996, n.d., Boxes 10-12**, is arranged chronologically, and alphabetically by year where possible. This series consists of poems and other writings by Sr. Irma including *Spin Offs*, *Country Day* and the *ABC Zoo*. *Country Day* and the *ABC Zoo* are located in an oversize box.

**Series 7: Restricted Materials, 1991-1993, n.d., Box 13**, is restricted for use by permission of Mary Alma Sullivan, B.V.M. This series contains the original manuscript and illustrations for the *ABC Zoo*.

**Subjects:**

Corcoran, Sr. Irma  
Corcoran, Augustine D.  
Corcoran, Anna Conmey  
English Renaissance  
Milton, John  
*Milton's Paradise With Reference to the Hexameral Background*  
Mundelein College Chicago  
Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
Holme, Thomas  
*Thomas Holme: 1624-1695 Surveyor General of Pennsylvania*  
*ABC Zoo*  
*Spin Offs*  
John Frederick Lewis Award  
American Philosophical Society  
Upward Bound Program  
Historical Society of Pennsylvania  
Penn, William  
Philadelphia Numismatic and Antiquarian Society  
Freedom March  
Lawndale Contract Buyers  
Educator, American  
Women Authors, 20th century  
Women Poets, American, 20th century  
Women Religious

*Women and Leadership Archives  
Ann Ida Gannon, BVM, Center for Women and Leadership  
Loyola University Chicago*

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Dates</u>
<b>Series 1: Biographical Information, 1876-2000, n.d.</b>			
1	1	Baptismal Record, Census Record (Copies)	1905, 1925
	2	Faculty Records	1930-1992
	3	Clippings	1932-1990
	4	List of Publications, Awards, Lectures, etc.	1950
	5	Tributes to Fellow Sisters	1969-1984
	6	Golden Jubilee Booklet, etc.	1977-1982
	7	Personality Analysis	1989
	8	<i>Sarah Jane Kimball's Journal</i> , Manuscript	1989
	9	Senior Citizen Award	1991
	10	Photographs - Senior Citizen Award	1991
	11	Literary Executor Correspondence	1996-1997
	12	Passports	1971,1977
	13	American Natural Gas Co. Stocks	1963
	14	Tribute to Mary Irma Corcoran	2000
	15	Memoirs	N.D.
2	1	"For Irma Corcoran"	N.D.
	2	Sketches	N.D.
	3	Address Books	N.D.
	4	Photographs - Irma	1941-1993
	5	Photographs - Group	N.D.
	6	Photographs - Family and Friends	1876-1994
	7	Photographs - Trips	N.D.

*Women and Leadership Archives*  
*Ann Ida Gannon, BVM, Center for Women and Leadership*  
*Loyola University Chicago*

	8	Calendars/Diaries	1954-1955
	9	Calendars/Diaries	1956-1959
3	1	Calendars/Diaries	1960-1962
	2	Calendars/Diaries	1963-1965
	4	Calendars/Diaries	1966-1969
	5	Calendars/Diaries	1970-1974
	6	Calendars/Diaries	1975-1976
	7	Calendars/Diaries	1977-1979
4	1	Calendars/Diaries	1980-1984
	2	Calendars/Diaries	1985-1987
	3	Calendars/Diaries	1988-1989
	4	Calendars/Diaries	1990-1992
	5	Calendars/Diaries	1994-1995
	6	Diary Entries	N.D.

**Series 2: Education, 1926-1962, n.d.**

5	1	Academic Records	1927-1962
	2	Ph.D. Dissertation: <i>Milton's Paradise With Reference to the Hexameral Background</i>	1945
	3	Ph.D. Dissertation Research Materials	N.D.
	4	Commencement	1945
6		Diplomas	1926-1945

**Series 3: Correspondence, 1934-2000, n.d.**

5	5	Correspondence to Parents	1934
	6	Received Correspondence	1934-1980
	7	Received Correspondence	1981-1995
	8	Received Correspondence	N.D.

*Women and Leadership Archives*  
*Ann Ida Gannon, BVM, Center for Women and Leadership*  
*Loyola University Chicago*

	9	Correspondence Sent	1963-1992
	1	Correspondence Sent	N.D.
7	2	Correspondence with Cecilia Bodman, B.V.M.	1964-1980
	3	Correspondence with Cecilia Bodman, B.V.M.	N.D.
	4	Correspondence to B.V.M. Community	1955-1997
	5	Correspondence with Mary Alma Sullivan, B.V.M.	1997
	6	Correspondence with Carol Madden Adjoran	1964-1974
	7	Scholarly Correspondence	1934-1994
	8	Comments on <i>Spin Offs</i>	2000

**Series 4: Professional, 1948-1981, n.d.**

8	1	Instructor's Manual and Study Questions	1948
	2	List of Book Reviews Written	1956-1961
	3	Upward Bound	1968
	4	American Philosophical Association	1966-1992
	5	Historical Society of Philadelphia	1969-1992
	6	St. Agatha School	1973
	7	Certificates	1964,1981
	8	Medal	N.D.
	9	Scholarly Notes	N.D.

**Series 5: Thomas Holme, 1961-1993, n.d.**

9	1	American Association of University Women: Grant for Research	1961-1966
	2	Correspondence: Thomas Holme Research	1962-1995
	3	"The Family of Thomas Holme"	1969
	4	Permission Forms, Agreements, Payments	1969-1992
	5	American Philosophical Society	1966-1994

*Women and Leadership Archives*  
*Ann Ida Gannon, BVM, Center for Women and Leadership*  
*Loyola University Chicago*

6	Awards, Correspondence, Articles, Press Releases	1992-1994
7	<i>Thomas Holme: 1624-1695 Surveyor General of Pennsylvania - Autographed Copy</i>	1992
8	Book Reviews	1993, N.D.
9	Research Material	N.D.
10	General Text	N.D.
11	Photographs: Thomas Holme	N.D.
12	Reader's Report	N.D.
13	5 1/4" Disks	N.D.
14	5 1/4" Backup Disks	N.D.
15	Maps	N.D.

**Series 6: Other Writings, 1937-1996, n.d.**

10	1	Poetry	1937-1983
	2	<i>Centennial Ode</i>	1937
	3	<i>Memory of Margaret</i>	1940
	4	<i>Menu for a Shrew</i>	1943
	5	Research Material for <i>The Humors and Menu for a Shrew</i>	N.D.
	6	General Articles	1954-1997
	7	<i>Robert Southwell's Life of Our Lady</i>	1954
	8	<i>The Life After Death of Joe Stink</i>	1960
	9	<i>Verbal Illuminations in Troilus and Criseyde</i>	1972
	10	<i>Mr. Mellow's Macaroni Dinner</i>	1973
	11	<i>Life in the Little Green House</i>	1980
	12	<i>Me, Out Here</i>	1980
	13	<i>Eve and the Sons of Adam</i>	1982
	14	<i>That Eve Sinned by the Book</i>	1983

*Women and Leadership Archives*  
*Ann Ida Gannon, BVM, Center for Women and Leadership*  
*Loyola University Chicago*

11	1	<i>William Penn and His Purchasers: Problems in Paradise</i>	1994
	2	Photographs: William Penn	N.D.
	3	Editorials	1994-1995
	4	<i>Mary Jordan Conmey</i>	1995
	5	<i>Spin Offs</i>	1996
	6	<i>Amaryllis</i>	N.D.
	7	Children's Poetry	N.D.
	8	<i>The Glory Trail</i>	N.D.
	9	<i>Photographs -A Little Book of Hours</i>	N.D.
	10	<i>My Affair With Shakespeare</i>	N.D.
	11	<i>Things Natural</i>	N.D.
	12	<i>Spin Offs</i> - Original Submissions	N.D.
12	1	<i>Country Day</i>	1975
	2	<i>ABC Zoo</i> - Braille Version	1984

**Series 7: Restricted Materials, 1991-1993, n.d.**

	1	<i>ABC Zoo</i> : Permission for Braille Version	1991
	2	<i>ABC Zoo</i> Materials	N.D.
	3	Resume of Former Student	1993