

Padgett/Levesque Photograph Collection

Cambridge Historical Commission
831 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Provenance: Gift of Ms. Catherine Padgett, August 9, 2002.

Collection ID: P019

Dates: ca. 1920s-1930s

Extent: 1 folder, held in Small Collections Box 1

Processing: Processing and finding aid by Maeve Strucker, September 3, 2002. Finding aid reformatted by Brittany Fox, October 2020.

Languages: English

Access: Collection is available for research under the CHC rules of use.

Collection Description:

This collection consists of thirteen black and white photographs of varying sizes relating to the life of Claire Lawrence Levesque and her affiliation with the Holy Ghost Hospital for Incurables in Cambridge, Massachusetts. All images are in good condition and date to the 1920s and 1930s.

Historical Note:

Claire Lawrence Levesque (ca. 1903-1999) was raised in an orphanage -- possibly in Lawrence, Massachusetts -- after having been abandoned at the age of five.

At the age of sixteen, she met Joseph Levesque, who was from Cambridge. After marrying, Joseph and Claire lived in Cambridge for a time.

Claire Levesque worked as a nurse's aide at Holy Ghost Hospital in the 1920s and 1930s, and in spite of, or maybe *because* of having lived a difficult life, she was a "very caring and very giving person," according to her daughter, Catherine. Several of the photographs in this collection represent the friendships and bonds she formed with her contemporaries at the hospital.

Note: Since very little is known of her birth family aside from the fact that her father died just prior to her having been orphaned, "Lawrence" may not have been Claire's true maiden name.

The information in this Historical Note was acquired from a telephone conversation with Claire Lawrence Levesque's daughter, Catherine Padgett, 8/19/02.

Scope and Content:

1. *Two boys on a Neapolitan Ice Cream Co. truck*, undated. 5.40" x 3.40". This image shows two boys posing in an ice cream truck; one sits on the driver's seat, and the other in the bed of the truck. On the reverse, in blue ink, the image is inscribed: "Romeo 9 or 10 yrs. Old." The notation refers to Catherine Padgett's father, Joseph Romeo, who sits in the driver's seat. According to Ms. Padgett, his name was originally Romeo Joseph, but he changed it after becoming a United States citizen. Incidentally, he was one of

seventeen children. Ms. Padgett believes there is no link between Joseph Romeo and the Neapolitan Ice Cream Company.

2. *Portrait of Claire Lawrence Levesque and Catherine Lynch*, undated. 5.45" x 3.50". This photo shows two young women posing in front of a pastoral photographer's backdrop. The young woman on the left is seated and wears a white dress and veil, while the young woman on the right is standing and wearing a black, drop-waist dress. There is no inscription on the reverse. According to Ms. Padgett, the woman in white is her mother, Claire Lawrence Levesque, who is dressed for her Confirmation. The woman in black is Catherine Lynch, a close friend of Claire's, and the woman for whom Ms. Padgett is named. The backside of this photo is slightly obscured by the remnants of black paper to which it was once adhered.
3. *Portrait of Claire Lawrence Levesque, Confirmation*, undated. 5.45" x 3.50". In this portrait Claire Lawrence Levesque stands alone in front of a pastoral photographer's backdrop. An inscription, if any, is not visible because the backside of the photo is heavily masked by the remnants of black paper to which it was once adhered. The photo dates to 1923, according to Ms. Padgett.
4. *Portrait of Claire Lawrence Levesque*, undated. 5.45" x 3.50". In this image, Claire appears to be older than in the previous ones, yet she stands before the same photographer's backdrop. Perhaps she appears older only because her hairstyle and clothing are different. She wears a long, black dress and a long beaded necklace. The reverse of this photo is slightly obscured by the remnants of black paper and some type of adhesive. An inscription, "Claire," has been added in blue ink.
5. *Snapshot of Claire Lawrence Levesque and Josephine [Levesque Jordan]*, undated. 2.60" x 4.30". This photo shows two women standing side-by-side; in the background can be seen the Beckwith & Co. factory at 35 Clarendon Avenue, Cambridge. The relation of the women to the site is unknown. The inscription on the reverse, written in blue ink, reads: "Josephine & Claire." According to Ms. Padgett, the "Josephine" in this photo is probably Josephine Levesque Jordan, Claire Levesque's sister-in-law.
6. *Unidentified sisters from Holy Ghost Hospital, Cambridge*, undated. 4.50" x 3.40". This photo shows seven nuns seated outside and before an American flag. Although difficult to confirm, they appear to be situated on the stern of an excursion boat. Much of the reverse of the photo is obscured by black paper. There is no visible inscription.
7. *Sister Sansoucy*, undated. 4.50" x 3.50". This photo shows an older sister seated on a porch or a deck. The front of the image is inscribed in blue ink: "Sister Sancousi [sic]". From research conducted at the Cambridge Historical Commission, it is believed that she is one of the following women: Anna, Laurette, or Marie Louise Sansoucy.
8. *Three sisters, Holy Ghost Hospital, Cambridge*, undated. 2.00" x 3.50". The image shows three young women standing in front of the base of a statue on the grounds of the Holy Ghost Hospital. The reverse of the photo, though slightly obscured by black paper, has the following inscription in black ink: "Sir. Delia Carrier...." (the rest of the notation is illegible)
9. *Unidentified nurse or nurse's aide*, undated. 2.80" x 4.50". This image shows a young woman seated in front of a brick building. She is dressed in a nurse's uniform. There is no inscription on the reverse.
10. *Eight unidentified female nurses and patients, Holy Ghost Hospital, Cambridge*, undated. 3.50" x 2.50". These women are seated, some in wheelchairs, by the easternmost front

entrance of the Holy Ghost Hospital. Several hold small flags, implying that the photo may have been taken on or near the Fourth of July. The reverse is slightly obscured by black paper; no inscription is visible.

11. *Memorial card for Reverend Joseph W. Thellen*, 1925. 2.80" x 4.20". Consists of a small photo of Reverend Thellen and the following information: "Reverend Joseph W. Thellen. Late chaplain of Holy Ghost Hospital, Cambridge, Mass. Born in Lowell, Mass., April 29, 1887. Ordained July 6, 1913. Died in Cambridge, February 26, 1925." In keeping with common practice, the reverse of the card is inscribed with a prayer.
12. *Snapshot of a young priest*, undated. 1.85" x 2.20". This appears to be a photograph of Reverend Joseph W. Thellen (see above memorial card), but there is no inscription.
13. *Holy Ghost Hospital, Cambridge, Mass.* undated. 4.70" x 3.00". This image shows the main building of the Holy Ghost Hospital, as well as two smaller and older looking buildings to the right (the administrative building and stable). Though undated, the photo predates 1926, when ground was broken for the addition of a west wing.

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