

## Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons (1881-1970) Collection Finding Aid

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### Collection Summary

**Title:** Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Collection

**Accession Numbers:** 2016.08

**Dates:** 1906-1967

**Bulk Dates:** 1906-1950

**Location:** East West Province Archives, Ipswich, MA

**Physical Description:** 16 Volumes.

**Abstract:** Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons was a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur from 1906 until her death in 1970. She was a professor of Latin and Political Science at Trinity College in Washington D.C. and at Emmanuel College in Boston, MA. The collection contains her personal, spiritual and professional journals from 1906 until 1967.

**Search Terms:**

Parsons, Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart, 1881-1970

Parsons, Elsie, 1881-1970

**Provenance:** The collection was moved from Emmanuel College after Sr. Wilfrid's death in 1970 to the archives in Ipswich.

**Processing:** The collection was arranged and processed in 2016.

**Conservation Work:** Boxes were created for all volumes because of their fragile state.

**Restrictions:** There are no restrictions for research. All research must be conducted in the New England Province Archives of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in Ipswich, Massachusetts.

**Biographical Information:** Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart [Sr. Wilfred du Sacre Coeur] was born Elsie Marie Parsons on Nov. 18, 1881 in Philadelphia, PA, the oldest of six children of Paul Julien and Alice Cecilia (Avery) Parsons. Her father was a structural engineer. She was a member of the first graduating class at Trinity College in 1904. The following year, she entered the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and was sent to Namur, Belgium for her novitiate. She took her first vows in 1907 and perpetual vows in 1916.

She took the religious name Sr. Wilfrid du Sacre Coeur after her brother, Wilfrid Parsons, who became a Jesuit and was later the editor at *America* magazine. He taught political science at Georgetown University.

After taking her first vows on August 20, 1907, she was sent to Northampton, England to teach. From there she was sent to Philadelphia to teach at the Notre Dame Academy in Rittenhouse Square. In 1909, Sister Wilfrid returned to Trinity College to teach Latin. While there, she began her Master's Degree which she completed in 1911. In 1923, she received her Ph.D. in classical languages from Catholic University. Her dissertation was entitled, "*A Study of the Vocabulary and Rhetoric of the Letters of St. Augustine.*"

She was Dean of Students at Trinity from 1924 to 1932 when she was transferred to Emmanuel College in Boston to teach Latin and Political Science where she remained for the rest of her life. She wrote many articles and was a frequent lecturer on classical languages and studies. She translated from Latin to English a five volume work on the collected letters of St. Augustine which was published by the Catholic University of American in 1955. It was entitled Fathers of the Church: Saint Augustine: Letters. Volumes 1-5.

She died in Worcester on March 30, 1970.

#### **Scope and Content Note:**

The collection contains 16 personal, retreat and prayer journals.

The first journal records her experiences during her novitiate in Namur, Belgium and the ceremony held in Namur to celebrate the Beatification of their founder, Julie Billiart. The journal begins in French, outlining the processional participants and daily schedule for celebration of the Beatification of Julie Billiart in Namur from May 17-21, 1906.

A description of some typical programs and ceremonies follows, then some entries on her thoughts on the beauty of Namur and some events during her novitiate, notes on the ceremonies for the first anniversary of Julie's beatification as well as some humorous tales. The leads up to her entry for her Vow Day on Aug. 20, 1907. Entries continue until Nov. 3, 1907. Several pages later [in which entries from 1919 are written] the journal for 1907 continues noting the arrival in Namur of electric lights, steam heat and the telephone. There is a brief entry for 1914, a diagram of the Organ at Namur, then the entries begin again on August 1919 at Trinity College. She describes on Oct. 30, 1919 the visit of King Albert of Belgium to Trinity. There is a brief entry on Feb. 17, 1934 noting that King Albert had died.

The journal also has entries beginning at the back and are written upside down from the front entries. This side describes in French what seem to be music lessons she took at Namur, and include hymns. Various rules and lessons follow about religious life, all in French. More note follow in English about Catholic Church music. A brief description of a pilgrimage to Brighton, near Antwerp follows.

Her later retreat and prayer journals contain her notes and thoughts for the retreats she attended.

Later personal journals record her experiences at Trinity College, her transfer to Emmanuel, her views on the Notre Dame Rule, thoughts on classes she taught, the movies she saw and books she read.

### **Organization and Container List Shelf**

Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Novitiate/Personal Journal, 1906-1934.

Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Prayer and Retreat Journal, 1906.

Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Retreat and Prayer Journal, 1910-1911.

Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Retreat and Prayer Journal, 1912-1931.

Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Retreat and Prayer Journal, 1932-1954.

Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Retreat and Prayer Journal, 1955-1962.

Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Personal Journal, 1924-1940.

Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Personal Journal, 1930.

Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Personal Journal, 1933-1937.

Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Personal Journal, 1943-1948.

Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Personal Journal, 1949-1954.

Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Personal Journal, 1955-1956.

Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Personal Journal, 1957-1960.

Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Personal Journal, 1961-1963.

Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Personal Journal, 1964-1965.

Sister Wilfrid of the Sacred Heart Parsons Personal Journal, 1966-1967.