

This summer I worked for the Mercy Heritage Center in Belmont, North Carolina. The Mercy Heritage Center is an archive that has record of all of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. The Sisters of Mercy were founded by Catherine McAuley in Dublin, Ireland in 1831 to help the poor, women, and children. The sisters were sent to the United States a little prior to the Civil War, and they went on to established many hospitals and schools throughout the country. My job as the intern was to handle, catalog, and sometimes clean artifacts that related to the Sisters of Mercy. Although I worked in an archive, my task was for artifacts that will be displayed in the future museum of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, which will open in the next few years. My day to day job consisted of bringing artifacts from a collection out of the archives or artifacts room, bringing them to my designated work station, and cataloging the artifacts on a sheet of paper. Archives, like museums and libraries, have hundreds of collections based on donors or particular people. Some artifact collections needed to be photographed, while others were already in our database. Once enough pictures or sheets had piled up in a collection, then the cataloged information and pictures had to be entered into the database for the archives. This process created a structure system of artifacts from various collections. I worked from 9am to 5pm every weekday beginning on June 10 through August 2.

While working at the Mercy Heritage Center I acquired many skills that will help my ability in the workforce. The first is the necessary attention to minor details while working on a simple or easy task. Before this job, I would not always pay close attention to details that I believed were irrelevant. After a week at the Archives I quickly realized that if I did not pay close attention to every detail of an object then I could lose the significance of that object. While working at the archives I also further developed a life skill that comes with age, patience. Many of the objects that had to be cataloged took a while to fully process. An object that had no room for a tag, like a medal of the Pope John Paul II, must have the catalog number written directly on the object but in a way that would not permanently damage it. It was a long and difficult process.

During my two month internship, I, along with another intern, who was part-time, managed to catalog almost the entire artifacts room. The only collection the two of us did not touch was a large collection that had already been done by another intern. We cataloged 10 collections and added more artifacts to the previously done collection. Not only did we accomplish cataloging all the artifacts in the collections, but also the paintings. Now the artifacts that were in the archives when I arrived have all been cataloged, therefore the archivist can continue with their collections without having to stress about the piling artifacts.

While working at Mercy Heritage Center, I learned the day to day activities, research, and task. My favorite part of the job was the way I was treated. I did not know what to expect when I arrived but I was not expecting anything as great as it was. My bosses did not treat me like an intern that would fetch coffee and make copies; rather I was one of the employees who was working on a part of a group goal. While the other intern and I cataloged the artifacts, the two archivists were also going through collections organizing newspaper clippings and photographs. This dynamic made me feel as if I was actually employed there. I always felt like I was actually accomplishing something and constantly working. My least favorite part of my job actually occurred on the second to last day of my internship. The other intern and I were tasked with hanging a few paintings that the group had picked out for our work space. They were going smoothly until we got to three paintings that had to be in a grouping. I think it took almost two hours to hang those three paintings and even after that they still were not straight!

The Mercy Heritage Center gave me the impression that if I was to go into the archival or museum field that I would truly love it. I already had the feeling that working at a place like this would be an ideal career, but after working this summer I know that it is what I want to do.