

# University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection

## Finding Aid - Merici Academy Collection (CHC5376)

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# Merici Academy Collection

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## Summary information

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**Repository:** University of Miami Cuban Heritage Collection

**Title:** Merici Academy Collection

**ID:** CHC5376

**Date:** 1941-2012 (date of creation)

**Physical description:** Boxes

**Language:** Spanish

**Language:** English

**Dates of creation,  
revision and deletion:**

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## Administrative history / Biographical sketch

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### Note

Merici Academy was a private, Catholic elementary and secondary school for girls established in Havana by American Ursuline nuns in 1941. The Order of Saint Ursula, founded in Italy by Saint Angela Merici in 1535 as the first order in the Church dedicated to the education of girls, had a presence in Havana since 1804, when nuns originating from the New Orleans chapter of the order opened the first school for girls on the island. Initially under the protection of the Spanish Crown and Cuban colonial authorities, the school, known as the Colegio de las Ursulinas, flourished and expanded well into the twentieth century. In 1937, the school added an English department, which led to the creation of the English Academy under the direction of American nuns. The English Academy became the nucleus for the foundation of Merici Academy, a bilingual Catholic girls' school that would offer English as the main teaching language. In February 1940, the Prioress General of the Ursulines, Reverend Mother St. Jean Martin, traveled to Cuba to assess the possibilities of establishing another Ursuline school in Havana - Merici Academy. The school opened in September 1941 with Mother Thomas Voorhies of New Orleans as founder and directress, and was immediately successful. Mother Thomas was assisted by Mother Rita Connell of Galveston, Texas, Mother Cecelia Prudhomme of Dallas, Texas, and Mother Bernadette Daly of Frontenac, Minnesota, who was already teaching at the Miramar Academy. Elementary courses, Pre-Primary to 7th Grade, were taught in English; additionally, in compliance with Cuban law, the requisite elementary curriculum was offered in Spanish. There were two types of courses at the secondary level. The Academic course was much like an American high school; and the Commercial and Secretarial courses offered bilingual business training. The curriculum was designed in accordance with the traditional Ursuline model of education, which is "based on the general principles of classical and Christian philosophy and permeated with sound religious spirit." After its initial success, Merici Academy continued to exceed all expectations. In its twenty years of existence, the school operated at three locations. Two were private residential properties under lease in

the neighborhood of Vedado: L and 19th Streets (1941-1943) and Línea and 6th Streets (1943-1949). The third was Merici's own property, custom designed and built in the Reparto Biltmore, a residential suburb west of Havana (1949-1961). Before it was closed by the revolutionary government in 1961, Merici Academy had brought forth nineteen graduating classes with close to seven hundred Academic, Commercial and Secretarial graduates.

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## Scope and content

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The Merici Academy Collection documents the experiences of students of Merici Academy, a private, Catholic elementary and secondary school for girls. Established in Havana by American Ursuline nuns, the school operated from 1941 to 1961, when it was closed by the revolutionary government. The collection includes yearbooks, photographs, programs, newsletters, awards, pins, medals, banners, CDs, a straw bonnet hat and beanie worn for school holidays, and the standard school uniform.

## Notes

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### Title notes

### Immediate source of acquisition

Gift of the Merici Academy Alumnae Association (MAAA), 2015.

### Arrangement

The materials in this collection are arranged in the order in which they were received.

### Restrictions on access

This collection is open for research.

### Conditions governing use

Requests to publish or display materials from this collection require written permission from the rights owner. Please contact [chc@miami.edu](mailto:chc@miami.edu) for more information.

### Accruals

The repository continues to add materials to this collection on a regular basis.

### Other notes

- **Publication status:** Published
- **Description identifier:** ArchonInternalCollectionID:1585

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## Series descriptions

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| Ref code | Title                                      | Dates      | Access status | Container |
|----------|--|------------|---------------|-----------|
| id374647 | File -                                     |            |               | 1         |
| id374648 | File - Class of 1956 documents             | 1956-2011  |               | 1 1       |
| id374649 | File - Scrapbook                           |            |               | 1 2       |
| id374650 | File -                                     |            |               | 2         |
| id374651 | File - Album                               |            |               | 2 1       |
| id374652 | File - Textbooks                           |            |               | 2 2       |
| id374653 | File - Textbooks                           |            |               | 2 3       |
| id374654 | File - Guasch, Beatriz                     | 1966       |               | 2 4       |
| id374655 | File - Maestri, Silvia                     | 1962       |               | 2 5       |
| id374656 | File - Ursuline Order, books and pamphlets |            |               | 2 6       |
| id374657 | File - Casa Angela, Iguala, Mex.           | 1990s-200s |               | 2 7       |

|          |  |             |      |
|----------|--|-------------|------|
| id374658 | File - Diaz, Sonia   | 1962        | 2 8  |
| id374659 | File - Tamargo, Seida  |             | 2 9  |
| id374660 | File - School history and alumnae association  |             | 2 10 |
| id374661 | File - Photographs   | 1950s-1960s | 2 11 |
| id374662 | File - Masvidal, Marja   |             | 2 12 |
| id374663 | File - Agudo, Nora   |             | 2 13 |
| id374664 | File - Serviam   | 1975-2015   | 2 14 |
| id374665 | File - Serviam   | 1975-2015   | 2 15 |
| id374666 | File - Merici Academy Alumnae Association  |             | 2 16 |
| id374667 | File - Program of Summer mass/luncheon   |             | 2 17 |
| id374668 | File - Arteaga, Ana Marja  |             | 2 18 |
| id374669 | File - Initiation of commencement ceremony and photograph                              |             | 2 19 |
| id374670 | File - The Catholic University of America - Diploma (Bertha McDonald)                  |             | 2 20 |
| id374671 | File - CD - "Merici Academy Memories"  | 2015        | 2 21 |
| id374672 | File - Postcards of school and photograph of emblem                                    |             | 2 22 |
| id384439 | File - Photographs of commencement ceremony  | 1960        | 2 23 |
| id374673 | File -   |             | 3    |
| id374674 | File - Scrapbook - Carmen Rosa Villa (Carmen Borbolla)                                 |             | 3 23 |
| id374675 | File -   |             | 4    |
| id374676 | Item - g. Nora Agudo - pins for handwriting; perfect attendance and overall excellence |             | 4    |
| id374677 | Item - g. Alicia Mena - bows   |             | 4    |
| id374678 | Item - g. Alicia Mena - medals   |             | 4    |
| id374679 | Item - g. Alicia Mena - medals   |             | 4    |
| id374680 | Item - g. Ana Alejandre  | 1958        | 4    |
| id374681 | Item - g. Luisa Beguirista;n (López Medranzo)  |             | 4    |
| id374682 | File - Straw bonnet hat for gala uniform and beanie to complement standard uniform     |             | 5    |
| id374683 | File - Merici Academy Banner   |             | 6    |
| id374684 | File - Display of photographs and school memorabilia                                   |             | 7    |