

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada

Finding Aid - Annals Attawapiskat, Ont. series (F01-S034)

Generated by Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada on October 03, 2025

Language of description: English

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Annals Attawapiskat, Ont. series

Table of contents

Summary information	3
Administrative history / Biographical sketch	3
Scope and content	5
Notes	5
Access points	7
Collection holdings	7

Summary information

Repository:	Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada
Title:	Annals Attawapiskat, Ont. series
Reference code:	F01-S034
Date:	1972-1977 (creation)
Physical description:	0.2 cm of textual records
Dates of creation, revision and deletion:	This project has been made possible in part by Library and Archives Canada's Documentary Heritage Communities Program. By Lyllie Sue, August 2024.

Administrative history / Biographical sketch

Note

The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of London, Ontario was first incorporated on February 15, 1891 under chapter 92 of the Statutes of Ontario, 1870-1. London, Ontario is on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, L̄naapéewak, and Attawandaron Peoples.

On December 11, 1868, at the request of Bishop John Walsh, five Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto arrived in London, Ontario. Mother Teresa Brennan, Sister Ignatia Campbell, Sister Ursula McGuire, Sister Francis O'Malley and Sister Appolonia Nolan were accompanied by Reverend Mother Antoinette McDonald and were welcomed by Bishop Walsh, Rev. J.M. Bruyere, V.G., and Rev. P. Egan, pastor of St. Peter's Church. Awaiting the Sisters were sleighs that transported them from the train station to a temporary home at 170 Kent Street.

In accordance with their mission in London, three Sisters began teaching at St. Peter's School in January, 1869. After classes, they visited the sick, the poor and the imprisoned. They were also mandated to open an orphanage in the future. In order to accomplish these tasks, more Sisters and larger facilities were necessary.

On October 2, 1869, the Barker House at the corner of Richmond and College Street in North London was purchased and the Sisters moved there from Kent Street. The building was named Mount Hope, and it became the first Motherhouse of the Sisters, eventually housing the elderly, orphans, Sisters and novices. On December 18, 1870, the Sisters of St. Joseph became an autonomous congregation in the London diocese, independent of the Toronto congregation. Sister Ignatia Campbell was appointed Superior General, an office she held until 1902. On February 15, 1871, the congregation became legally incorporated.

On October 7, 1877, an addition was made to Mount Hope. This building stood until it was demolished on August 3, 1980, surrounded by the growing healthcare institutions founded by the Sisters, beginning with St. Joseph's Hospital which opened at 268 Grosvenor Street on October 15, 1888, and followed by the opening of St. Joseph's Hospital School of Nursing in 1895, and the construction of a new nursing school building in 1927, which saw its last graduation in 1977. On May 1, 1951, St. Mary's Hospital was opened,

followed by Marian Villa on January 12, 1966. In 1985, the hospital complex was renamed St. Joseph's Health Centre, and ownership was transferred in 1993 to St. Joseph's Health Care Society.

But it was not only in London that Sisters saw the need for healthcare and nursing education. On October 15, 1890, they opened St. Joseph's Hospital on Centre Street in Chatham, Ontario, which remained under their control until 1993. In 1895, they opened St. Joseph's Hospital School of Nursing, which saw its last graduation in 1970. On October 18, 1946, they opened St. Joseph's Hospital at 290 North Russell Street in Sarnia which remained under their control until 1993. In Alberta, they administered St. Joseph's Hospital in Stettler (1926), St. Joseph's Hospital in Galahad (1927), the General Hospital in Killam (1930), and St. Paul's Hospital in Rimbey (1932).

On April 10, 1899, the Sisters opened Mount St. Joseph Motherhouse, Novitiate and Orphanage at the former Hellmuth College at 1486 Richmond Street North in London. The orphans were moved to this new location from Mount Hope, which remained a home for the elderly and was renamed House of Providence on June 3, 1899. The orphanage remained at Mount St. Joseph until it was moved to Fontbonne Hall in 1953 (to 1967). The original Hellmuth College building was demolished in 1976.

Later, on September 14, 1914, the Motherhouse and Novitiate moved to Sacred Heart Convent at Colborne and Dundas Streets in London, with the orphans remaining at Mount St. Joseph. The Sisters lived at Sacred Heart Convent until 1953, when they moved back to the newly built Mount St. Joseph, on the original location of the former Hellmuth College. The new Motherhouse and Novitiate was officially opened on June 29, 1954. It was here that they continued a private girls' school which had begun in 1950 at Sacred Heart Convent, and was now known as Mount St. Joseph Academy (to 1985). It was here too that they continued a music school which had also begun at Sacred Heart Convent and was now called St. Joseph's School of Music (to 1982). The Médaille Retreat Centre began here in 1992, and the Sisters also administered a Guest Wing for relatives of hospitalized patients (to 2005). The Sisters departed Mount St. Joseph for their new residence, a green building at 485 Windermere Road in London, in 2007.

On September 4, 1873, St. Joseph's Convent opened at 131 North Street in Goderich, Ontario, followed by other convents in Ontario, including Ingersoll (1879), St. Thomas (1879), Belle River (1889), Windsor (1894), Sarnia (1906), Kingsbridge (1911), Seaforth (1913), St. Mary's (1913), Woodstock (1913), Kinkora (1916), Paincourt (1923), Maidstone (1930), Leamington (1932), Delhi (1938), Tillsonburg (1938), Simcoe (1938), Langton (1939), West Lorne (1957), and Zurich (1963).

The Sisters also opened missions in other parts of Canada, including in Alberta: Edmonton (1922), Wetaskiwin (1929), St. Bride's (1934); and in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories Yellowknife (1953), and in British Columbia in Haney, now Maple Ridge (1956), and Rutland (1970). Branching even further afield, Convento San Jose was opened in Chiclayo, Peru in 1962.

Over the years, as well as their service as teachers in the separate school system, as music teachers, as healthcare workers, as nursing educators, in providing care to orphans, and in providing parish ministry, pastoral care, and administering spiritual retreats, the Sisters were also involved in social service ministry. In Windsor, they opened the Roy J. Bondy Centre on September 13, 1970 which was a receiving home for the Children's Aid Society, withdrawing in 1982 but continuing to provide residential care for disabled children afterward. In London, they opened Internos, a residence for teenage girls attending school and later for troubled teens (to 1979). This was followed by the opening of St. Joseph's Detoxification Centre on September 13, 1973 (to 2005) and St. Stephen's House, an alcoholic recovery centre on February 1, 1982 (to 2000). Loughlin House in London opened as a residence for ex-psychiatric female patients in 1986 (to 1989), followed by the Home for Women in Need at 534 Queens Avenue in 1979 (to 2004).

Later, St. Josephs' House for Refugees was opened in 1987 (to 2005), followed by St. Joseph's Hospitality Centre, a food security program, on February 2, 1983.

On November 22, 2012, the congregation amalgamated with those in Hamilton, Peterborough, and Pembroke into one charitable corporation under the name Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in

Canada by the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada Act, a Private Act of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which received Royal Assent on June 13, 2013.

Scope and content

This series contains records of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Ontario's activities at in Attawapiskat, Ontario, from July 8 to 30, 1972. This series contains a written report in the form of a diaristic letter addressed to the Superior General Mother Cathleen Flynn (Mary Brendan), from Sisters Caroline Catherine (Concessa) O'Connor and Sister Monica Marie (Cyril) Reynolds who served in the Attawapiskat Mission. The Sisters wrote about the strenuous journey and the efforts undertaken whilst traveling to the rural and remote area of Attawapiskat as well as the challenging circumstances the people of Attawapiskat faced. There is also a news bulletin for July 24, 1977, about the schedule of summer events at St. Patrick's Church in the Parish of St. Patrick in Kapuskasing, Ontario. In addition, there is a newspaper article, "Education program at St. Pat's," was written by Carolyn Towne for *Northern Times,* and published in July 1977. The article covers the various religious enrichment classes for children led by Sister Margaret Maloney and Sister Bernice Hennessy of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, at St. Patrick's Church Hall.

Notes

Title notes

- **Source of title proper:** Title is based on the contents of the series.

Immediate source of acquisition

These records were accumulated by the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Ontario.

Arrangement

Original order was maintained.

Location of originals

The records are located at The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada Archives.

Restrictions on access

The Archives reserves the right to restrict access to the collection depending on the condition of the archival material, the amount of material requested, and the purpose of the research. The use of certain materials may also be restricted for reasons of privacy or sensitivity, or under a donor agreement. Access restrictions will be applied equally to all researchers and reviewed periodically. No researcher will be given access to any materials that contain a personal information bank such as donor agreements or personnel records, or to other proprietary information such as appraisals, insurance valuations, or condition reports.

Conditions governing use

Permission to study archival records does not extend to publication or display rights. The researcher must request this permission in writing from the Archives.

Finding aids

Series and file list available.

Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

Note [Sources]

Whose Land, "Attawapiskat First Nation," <https://www.whose.land/en/communities/attawapiskat-first-nation>, accessed 2024/08/30.

Atkinson, Joan, pers. comm., August 30, 2024.

Ritchie, Margot, pers. comm., August 30, 2024.

Note [General]

Some content within this record group contains language that is offensive, derogatory, or harmful. This language does not reflect the values of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada.

Note [General]

In the 1970s, the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate of London, Ontario founded several remote missions on First Nation Reserves in Northern Ontario, including Camp Oskiniko, Moosonee, Moose Factory, Fort Albany, Winisk, and Attawapiskat. The Oblates invited the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Ontario to establish a summer program to teach catechetics to the Indigenous children in the Village of Attawapiskat. Sister Caroline Catherine (Concessa) O'Connor and Sister Monica Marie (Cyril) Reynolds answered the call to minister in Attawapiskat. In July 1972, they traveled by a small plane that landed in the Attawapiskat River, where an Oblate Brother met them and brought them to the Mission House. The Sisters lived at the Mission House with Father Gagnon, the pastor at Attawapiskat and with two other Oblate Brothers. At the time, the rural community of Attawapiskat had a population of 400 people with 320 children under 10-years of age, 48 people below age 65, and 32 people over age 65. Attawapiskat was 0.80km long with a single mud clay road. Government social assistance was provided to every family to help offset the cost of food items sold at very high prices, that arrived with other supplies every six months on a river barge. Attawapiskat is 1400km north of London, at the mouth of the Attawapiskat River on the west coast of James Bay in Northern Ontario, situated on the James Bay Treaty of 1905 (Treaty 9) traditional homelands of the #htaw#piskatowi ininiwak (Attawapiskat First Nation), of the Mushkegowuk (Cree, People of Muskeg) Community.

Sister Caroline and Sister Cyril resided at the Mission House in Attawapiskat from July 8 to July 30, 1972, and operated a summer program for children. There were two classes, one primary and one senior with about 23 students in each class. The Sisters taught religious and English language classes, organized arts and crafts activities, and went on nature explorations, lake swims, and other outdoor excursions. Classes were held from 10 a.m. to noon and from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. in the afternoon. The Sisters also made the time to conduct house visits to counsel families, especially youth who were impacted by the limited resources of growth opportunities available in the area.

Other notes

- **Publication status:** Published
- **Level of detail:** Partial
- **Status description:** Final

Access points

- Textual record (documentary form)

Collection holdings

File: F01-S034-01 - Roman Catholic Mission, Srs. Caroline O'Connor and Marie Cyril Reynolds

Title: Roman Catholic Mission, Srs. Caroline O'Connor and Marie Cyril Reynolds

Reference code: F01-S034-01

Date: 1972-1977 (date of creation)

Physical description: 0.2 cm of textual records

: 0344

Location of originals: London Annals Box 5 (0344)

Publication status:

Published
