

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada

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Annals Chatham, Ont. series

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Summary information

Repository:	Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada
Title:	Annals Chatham, Ont. series
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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 the history of the Chatham Mission in Chatham, Ontario of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Ontario from 1982 to 2012. It contains historical summaries written by Sister Ann Purtill on the activities at the residence on Robinson Avenue, Chatham, Ontario, and historical summaries written by Sister Mary Diane Cahill on the activities at the residence on Dufferin Avenue, Chatham, Ontario. Some of the topics include moving in and out days, house renovation and landscaping, jubilees and seasonal celebrations, attending retreats and workshops, Bursary Meetings, General Chapter Meetings, Associate Business Meetings, and the Regional Conference for Associates. There is also an inventory list of furniture that was transported from London to Chatham, Ontario by the Aero Mayflower Transit Company Limited, on August 25, 1982.

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]

Chatham-Kent, “Traditional Territory Acknowledgment,” <https://www.chatham-kent.ca/livingck/communities/landacknowledgment/Pages/default.aspx>, accessed 2024/09/10.

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]

On October 15, 1890, the Sisters opened St. Joseph’s Hospital in Chatham, Ontario. The School of Nursing was opened by the Sisters in 1901 and remained until the final graduating class in 1970. Chatham is part of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, Ontario, and is situated on the traditional territory of the McKee Purchase Treaty of 1790 (Treaty 2) of the Three Fires Confederacy (also known as the Anishinaabeg): the Odawa, Potawatomi, and Ojibwe as well as the Lunaapeew Peoples.

On August 25, 1982, Sister Ann Purtill and Sister Barbara Hughes of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London arrived from London, Ontario to Chatham, Ontario to establish a new House on Robinson Avenue as part of the Chatham Mission. The Sisters moved into a two-story red brick house and started to build a chapel in the basement. Sister Ann was appointed the Superior and Local Bursar, and she was also the Superintendent at St. Joseph’s Hospital of Chatham. Sister Barbara worked in the hospital in the role of a nurse. On September 24, 1982, Sister Ann Patrick Comiskey was assigned to work in the Pastoral Care Department at the hospital and joined the household. The completed chapel officially opened on December 16, 1982. On January 31, 1983, Sister Ann Patrick returned to London for health reasons, ending her Chatham Mission. On August 1, 1983, Sister Barbara resigned from her position at St. Joseph’s Hospital, and in 1984, the Robinson Avenue House was closed.

In 1992, the Sisters withdrew from residence at the hospital, and in 1993 the ownership of the hospital was changed over to the St. Joseph’s Health Care Society. The hospital is now Riverview Gardens, a long-term care facility. In the first week of August 1992, Sisters Mary Electa Bondy, Emerita Godal, Leona Givlin, and Anne Louise Cape were the remaining Sisters that served in Chatham. Sister Mary Electa, a hospital social worker, lived in the Ursuline Motherhouse, a Convent called The Pines, and retired on June 24, 1993. Sister Emerita was a pastoral minister in the Blessed Sacrament Parish and took up residence on Hillyard Street. Sister Leona provided hospital pastoral care and Sister Anne Louise was a pastoral minister in St. Ursula’s Parish who shared an apartment together on Dufferin Avenue, Chatham, Ontario. In August 1996, Sister Mary Diane Cahill moved into the Dufferin Avenue House, and four more Sisters arrived in the fall. In June 1997, Sister Anne Louise retired from the St. Joseph’s Hospital Board after six years as a trustee. The Blessed Sacrament Parish honoured Sister Emerita’s 21 years of service in the Parish from December 30 to 31, 2000, and in the summer of 2001, she moved to London, Ontario. Sister Anne Louise retired from the Parish Ministry on July 31, 2010, and continued to live in Chatham, until she relocated to London, Ontario on October 12, 2011.

Other notes

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

Access points

- Textual record (documentary form)

Collection holdings

File: F01-S039-01 - Dufferin Avenue, Volume 4

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Date: 2010-2012 (date of creation)

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Location of originals: London Annals Box 6 (0345)

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File: F01-S039-02 - Dufferin Avenue, Volume 3

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File: F01-S039-03 - Dufferin Avenue, Volume 1

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File: F01-S039-04 - Dufferin Avenue, Volume 2

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File: F01-S039-05 - Robertson Avenue, Volume 2

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