

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada

Finding Aid - Annals France series (F01-S015)

Generated by Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada on April 30, 2025

Language of description: English

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Annals France series

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Summary information

Repository:	Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada
Title:	Annals France series
Reference code:	F01-S015
Date:	[19-?], 2004-2007 (creation)
Physical description:	.25 cm of textual records 1 album (12 photographs: b&w)
Language:	English
Dates of creation, revision and deletion:	July 11, 2024 by Lyllie Sue, edited by Rhiannon Allen-Roberts.Revised December 6, 2024 by Rhiannon Allen-Roberts.

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 documents the activities of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, in Le Puy-en-Velay, France. There are correspondences from Sister Mary Diesbourg and Sister Mary Zimmer, both of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Ontario, from 2004 to 2007. There are also news leaflets with updates about the projects of the Centre International St. Joseph. The records concern Sister Mary Zimmer's arrival in Le Puy-en-Velay in 2004 to help prepare for the opening of the Centre International St. Joseph, the planning of a international program for young adults for 2008, the Spring 2007 meeting of the French Federation Leadership, the Spring Sabbath sabbatical month, a new contemplative experience program called Radical Grace, jubilees, and daily activities of the Sisters. There is also a photograph album with French text from the Sisters of St. Joseph of Lyon with photographs of people, places, and objects related to the founding of the order.

Notes

Title notes

- **Source of title proper:** Title based on content of 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]

Centre International St. Joseph, "History of the Centre," <https://centreinternationalssj.org/history-of-the-centre>, accessed 2024/06/12.

Centre International St. Joseph, "Vision 7 Mission of the Centre," <https://centreinternationalssj.org/vision>, accessed 2024/06/24.

Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada, "International Centre St. Joseph," <https://www.csjfederation.ca/international-centre-st-joseph>, accessed 2024/06/24.

Note [General]

In the mid-17th century, the Sisters of St. Joseph began with six women meeting in a small kitchen in Le Puy-en-Velay, France. Under the spiritual direction of Jean Pierre Medaille, a Jesuit priest, these women formed the first community of the Sisters of St. Joseph, named after Saint Joseph. The Bishop of Le Puy, Henri de Maupas, gave the foundation canonical status, and its official founding date was on October 15, 1650. The Sisters lived simply and among the people, rather than behind cloistered walls as was the norm for religious women of the time. Over the next century, the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph experienced rapid growth in France, until it disbanded during the civil and religious unrest of the French Revolution. Unwilling to renounce their religion, many of the Sisters, led by Mother St. John (Jeanne) Fontbonne, were imprisoned or forced into hiding.

In 1807, the Cardinal of Lyons asked the remaining Sisters to establish a foundation in his city. Since then, the Sisters of St Joseph have assisting in and establishing schools, hospitals, and orphanages in France, England, Canada, the United States, Japan, India, and elsewhere around the world as needed. In 2024, there are approximately 14,000 Sisters of St Joseph globally.

On April 11, 2002, seventeen Sisters of St. Joseph representing all Ccongregations of the Sisters of St. Joseph gathered in Le Puy-en-Velay, France, and decided to establish a mission to encourage international collaboration between the Sisters. They found a suitable three-story house, in Aiguilhe, that was 1-kilometre from Le Puy-en-Velay. The building had 20 bedrooms and was formerly used as a residence for senior Sisters, but it had been closed the previous two years. This would become the Centre International St. Joseph. In May 2004, a Board of Directors was formed, and the new corporation of the board held its first official meeting. Sister Mary Diesburg of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Ontario became the Director of the Centre. Sister Mary Zimmer of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Ontario, traveled from Canada on October 5, 2004 to assist in the opening. The Centre International St. Joseph opened on October 15, 2004, but the original name for the building, Foyer St. Joseph was kept and honoured.

As of 2024, the Centre International St. Joseph in Le Puy-en-Velay, France, continues as a global project of all the Sisters of St. Joseph. It is a collaborative mission to promote collaboration and communion between Sisters, Associates, and lay partners.

Note [General]

This project has been made possible in part by Library and Archives Canada's Documentary Heritage Communities Program.

Other notes

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

Access points

- Textual record (documentary form)
- Multiple media (documentary form)
- Textual records (documentary form)
- Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada (London, Ont.) (subject)
- France (place)
- London (place)

Series descriptions

Reference code	Title	Dates	Physical description
F01-S015-01	File - Le Puy, France International Centre	2004-2007	.25 cm of textual records
F01-S015-02	File - Album de Famille	[19-?]	1 album (12 photographs: b&w)