

# **Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada**

## **Finding Aid - Annals Josephs' House, London, Ont. series (F01-S055)**

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## Summary information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada
<b>Title:</b>	Annals Josephs' House, London, Ont. series
<b>Reference code:</b>	F01-S055
<b>Date:</b>	1985-2024 (creation)
<b>Physical description:</b>	3 cm of textual records 1 photograph : col. 87 photographs : negatives, 16-mm 238 photographs : negatives, 35-mm 1 photo album : 30.5 x 33 x 7 cm
<b>Dates of creation, revision and deletion:</b>	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. By Lyllie Sue, December 2024.

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## Administrative history / Biographical sketch

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### 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, L#naapéewak, 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.

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## Scope and content

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This series contains the history of Josephs' House that was founded and operated by the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Ontario. Josephs' House served as initial interim accommodation for newly arrived refugees sponsored by the Community and refugee claimants who landed in London. The Sisters resettled sponsored refugees and assisted refugee claimants towards gaining permanent residency through the Canadian citizenship and immigration process. This series contains short histories, correspondence, lists of refugees, news clippings, and a photograph all related to the refugee ministry at Josephs' House in London, Ontario. In addition, there is a photo album that contains photographs and negatives depicting Sisters, priests, construction workers, refugees, and volunteers at Josephs' House on Dundas Street East in London, Ontario. The photographs depict different rooms inside the house, as well as the exterior and interior renovations at Josephs' House. There are photographs of the residents at Josephs' House participating in different activities such as: children playing with toys, having fun in the snow, and decorating a Christmas tree; students studying the English language, preparing meals, and rearranging furniture; and Sisters performing various household tasks. There are also photographs of celebrations, social gatherings, holidays, and trips to Gibbons Park and Storybook Gardens in London, Wildwood Conservation Area in St. Mary's, Niagara Falls, and Ottawa.

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## Notes

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### 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 with accruals added at the end.

### Location of originals

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

### Restrictions on access

File F01-S055-02 contains identifying information for refugees. It is restricted for the protection of the privacy of living persons for 100 years. 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]**

City of London, Ontario, "City of London Land Acknowledgement," <https://london.ca/city-london-land-acknowledgement>, accessed 2024/10/10.

Government of Ontario, "Map of Ontario treaties and reserves," <https://www.ontario.ca/page/map-ontario-treaties-and-reserves#>, accessed 2024/10/10.

Ritchie, Margo, pers. comm., December 27, 2024.

### **Note [General]**

In the early 1980s, Sister Mary Vandersteen, Sister Adele Reaume, Sister Mary Regier, and Sister Marcelline Janisse of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Ontario, started a ministry to support refugees arriving to London from Vietnam and Cambodia. In 1982, Sister Mary Van Leeuwen joined to assist with the social outreach project. The Sisters of St. Joseph sponsored displaced people who had refugee status and were on a pathway towards permanent immigration and Canadian citizenship. The Sisters provided housing, furnishings, clothing, and referrals for healthcare, education, and translation services. They taught English-as-a-Second Language classes, completed Canadian immigration forms, and financed living costs for up to a year. On April 29, 1987, the Sisters of St. Joseph purchased property at 707, 709, and 711 Dundas Street East, in London. At 709 Dundas Street, the Sisters renovated a building to serve as a refuge to house six adults and two small families who arrived in Canada as asylum seekers or refugee claimants. The house was named Josephs' House in honour of the two Josephs— Joseph, son of Jacob and Rachel from Book of Genesis in the Old Testament, and Joseph the Patriarch of the New Testament, both who lived the refugee experience.

Josephs' House opened on September 24, 1987, when Sister Helene Diesbourg, the Superior, Sister Maria Van Leeuwen, who managed the refugees, accounting, and administration, and Sister Marie Laprise, the housekeeper, moved in. About 1100 refugees from Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Columbia, Congo, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Philippines, Poland, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tanzania, Vietnam, and Yemen stayed at Josephs' House for one to one and a half months until permanent accommodation was found. The Sisters assisted the refugees with the submission of legal documents and preparing for different interviews such as with the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, immigration lawyers, and with financial agents at Social Assistance (later known as Ontario Works). When refugee claimants were refused the right to stay in

Canada, the Sisters wrote reference letters to their Member of Parliament and, for those who restarted the process after six-months, the Sisters continued to advocate for refugee status or accompanied them through their deportation process.

The Sisters collaborated with other individuals and organizations that were also helping refugees to cope with immigration authorities and to process their refugee status claim to legally stay in Canada. The Sisters of St. Joseph interacted with members from the Hungarian and Polish communities, Member of Parliament and representative of the London East electoral district Jim Jenson, an immigration officer, Women Immigrants of London, Women Immigrants of London Office Skills, the Spanish Lay Institute, and a settlement worker for refugee claimants at the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre. The London Cross Cultural Learner Centre was a newcomer resettlement agency, and a non-profit registered charity in London, Ontario. The London Cross Cultural Learner Centre also purchased property at the same time in September 1987 on Dundas Street East, for the same purpose: to provide provisional lodging for refugees that was part of a program called "Newcomer Services." The major difference was that the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre served government sponsored refugees who arrived in Canada as landed immigrants, as opposed to privately sponsored refugee claimants with no legal Canadian status. The Sisters of St. Joseph had a good working relationship with the London Cross Cultural Learner Center. On December 1, 2004, Josephs' House was handed over to the London Cross Cultural Learner Center.

The Sisters no longer administered Josephs' House but continued to financially support the refugee project for an additional two years and continued to operate other aspects of their refugee ministry. The Sisters shared the financial liabilities of refugee sponsorship in several joint programs, such as with Citizenship and Immigration Canada who fully funded all refugee costs; a Visa Referred Sponsorship program in which Citizenship and Immigration Canada funded a quarter to half a year of living costs, and the Sisters provided the rest; and a private sponsorship program in partnership with St. Michael's Parish in London, Ontario. As of 2024, the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada continue to support and advocate for the displaced, the persecuted and people in danger who were forced to flee their country of origin.

London, Ontario is situated on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, L#naapéewak and Attawandaron Nations, and land specific to Treaty 2 (McKee Purchase of 1790), Treaty 6 (London Township Purchase of 1796), Treaty 21 (Long Woods Purchase of 1819), Treaty 29 (Huron Tract Purchase of 1827), Nanfan Treaty of 1701, Two Row Wampum Belt Treaty of 1613, and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum of 1701.

## Other notes

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

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## Access points

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- Multiple media (documentary form)

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## Collection holdings

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**File: F01-S055-01 - News clippings and a photograph**

Title: News clippings and a photograph

Reference code: F01-S055-01

Date: 1987-2002 (date of creation)

: 0380

Location of originals: London Annals Box 12 (0380)

Publication status:

Published

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**File: F01-S055-02 - History and a list of refugees**

Title: History and a list of refugees

Reference code: F01-S055-02

Date: 1985-2005 (date of creation)

: 0380

Location of originals: London Annals Box 12 (0380)

Restrictions on access: This file contains identifying information of refugees. Restricted until 2105.

Publication status:

Published

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**File: F01-S055-03 - History by Sister Maria Van Leeuwen**

Title: History by Sister Maria Van Leeuwen

Reference code: F01-S055-03

Date: Nov. 2013 (date of creation)

: 0380

Location of originals: London Annals Box 12 (0380)

Publication status:

Published

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**File: F01-S055-04 - History, the House at 709 Dundas, and news clippings**

Title: History, the House at 709 Dundas, and news clippings

Reference code: F01-S055-04

Date: 1987-1989 (date of creation)

: 0380

Location of originals: London Annals Box 12 (0380)

Publication status:

Published

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**File: F01-S055-05 - Binder of photos (Josephs' House) 1987-1990**

Title: Binder of photos (Josephs' House) 1987-1990

Reference code: F01-S055-05

Date: 1987-1990 (date of creation)

: 0379

Location of originals: London Annals Box 12 (0380), separated to Box 11 (0379) due to size.

Publication status:

Published

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**File: F01-S055-06 - Refugee Ministry**

Title: Refugee Ministry

Reference code: F01-S055-06

Date: Dec. 2-11, 2024 (date of creation)

: 0380

Location of originals: London Annals Box 12 (0380)

Publication status:

Published

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