

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

## **Finding Aid - Annals St. Brides series (F01-S025)**

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

Language of description: English

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# Annals St. Brides series

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## Table of contents

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Summary information .....	3
Administrative history / Biographical sketch .....	3
Scope and content .....	5
Notes .....	5
Access points .....	7
Series descriptions .....	7

## Summary information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada
<b>Title:</b>	Annals St. Brides series
<b>Reference code:</b>	F01-S025
<b>Date:</b>	1927-1980 (creation)
<b>Physical description:</b>	2.4 cm of textual records 53 photographs : b&w 8 photographs : col.
<b>Dates of creation, revision and deletion:</b>	By Lyllie Sue August 2024, under the supervision of Rhiannon Allen-Roberts.

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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 a history of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Ontario's activities in St. Brides, Alberta. \*History of St. Bride's Settlement, Alberta\*, is a written history authored by Sister M. Winnifrid Downs covering 1927 to 1956. It was an assignment submitted on July 31, 1956, for a history summer school course at the University of Alberta. The essay topics include immigration policies, the original and later settlers, and the development and progress of St. Brides, with 47 photographs, maps, land plot diagrams, a pamphlet, a list of pioneer families who arrived in St. Brides in 1927, and a letter with an envelope to Sister Mary Winnifrid in Edmonton from Father MacDonell in Inverness-shire, in Ireland, on vows taken on April 14, 1956. There are also lists of Sisters who taught or were missioned to St. Brides from 1934 to 1964, as well as correspondence about collecting information to create a history of St. Brides, and newsclippings on the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of St. Brides Parish. There are printed pictures and photographs of the Sisters poised in front of St. Brides Convent in the mid-1950s, and photographs of the condominium residence of Sister St. Bride and Sister Rose Ellen in Edmonton. In addition, there is a photograph of a wooden and metal engraved plaque that was awarded to the Sisters for their fifty years of service in St. Brides from 1927 to 1977.

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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.

### 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]

C. Croucher, "Irish Place Names-St. Bride's," Library and Archives Canada, Heritage Trail, [https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/pasttopresent/settlement/422\\_Irish\\_Names\\_St\\_Brides.html](https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/pasttopresent/settlement/422_Irish_Names_St_Brides.html), accessed 2024/8/13.

C. I. Maclean, "Father Andrew MacDonell, M.B.E., M.C., O.S.B.," Calum Maclean Project, Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, <https://calumimaclean.blogspot.com/2017/06/father-andrew-macdonell-mbe-mc-osb.html>, accessed 2024/8/13.

Whose Land, "Treaties, Traditional Territories and Indigenous Communities - Saint Brides, Alberta, Canada," <https://www.whose.land/en/list>, accessed 2024/8/13.

## Note [General]

St. Brides, County of St. Paul, Alberta, is situated on the Territories of Treaty 6, 1876, of the Kehewin Cree Nation and Saddle Lake Cree Nation, and is the traditional homelands of the Cree, Plains Cree, Métis, and Stoney.

In 1928, the Celtic School was established and operated by the Sisters of Service from Edmonton, Alberta, to serve the educational needs of the settler families who were Roman Catholics. By request of Reverend Father MacDonell, the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Ontario took charge of the Celtic School and changed the name to St. Brides School and administered it from 1933 to 1964. St. Brides School was a 3-room school for elementary to junior high students in Grades 1 to 10. It was lacking paint on the outside and inside, had no electricity, no telephone, and no furnace to heat the building. A two-person operated outdoor pump with a deep well outside the kitchen door supplied all the water, coal-oil lamps were used for lighting, laundry was hand washed using a washboard, and local communication was delivered by a messenger on a horse. The school was supported by the municipality until 1939, when the school was incorporated in the St. Paul School District of Alberta.

The school children excelled at baseball, drama and music, and each year the Sisters organized plays and concerts for St. Patrick's Day, Easter, and Christmas. The Sisters' also facilitated school picnics, cultural celebrations, Achievement Days, and formed a Girls Club and a Sewing Club. The majority of the students were from farming families and during the Great Depression they experienced crop failure and financial loss, and could not pay their taxes, or loans for farming equipment and eventually lost their farms. The Sisters traveled by foot or by borrowed horse and buggy to conducting family visits to console and provide comfort during difficult times. Although there were numerous hardships, the parishioners were warm-hearted and generous despite their own meagre circumstances and donated butter, flour, potatoes, milk, cream, eggs, vegetables, and fowl to the Sisters in lieu of educational costs.

A major achievement of the Sisters during their time in St. Brides was organizing a rural electrification project with financial assistance and guidance from Father Young. By October 1953 there was electricity in the farming community of St. Brides. However, school enrollment steadily diminished over the next

several decades, and eventually St. Brides School and the Mission were closed, and the Sisters withdrew on June 30, 1964.

### 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]

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

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## Access points

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

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## Series descriptions

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Reference code	Title	Dates	Physical description
F01-S025-01	<b>File - History of St. Bride's Settlement, Alberta by Sister M. Winnifrid Downs</b>	1927-1956	
F01-S025-02	<b>File - St. Joseph's Convent of St. Brides</b>	1927-1964	
F01-S025-03	<b>File - St. Joseph's Convent of St. Brides and newsclippings</b>	1939-1964	
F01-S025-04	<b>File - Edmonton condo of Sisters St. Bride (Sarah Ann) Lavery and Rose Ellen Donnelly</b>	September 14, 1980	
F01-S025-05	<b>File - Correspondence, newsclippings, and draft for History of St. Bride's Settlement</b>	1940-1977	
F01-S025-06	<b>File - Photographs, Sisters at St. Brides Convent</b>	1954-1963	