

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada

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Annals St. Peter's Seminary, London, Ont. series

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Summary information

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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 consists of some brief information by the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Ontario during their ministry at St. Peter's Seminary in London, from 1912 to 1980. There are several lists of the Sisters of St. Joseph on staff who were stationed at St. Peter's Seminary and employed in housekeeping from 1912 to 1980. There is correspondence from 1967 to 1970 addressed to Mother M. Julia (Cecilia) Moore and letters dated from 1972 to 1973 addressed to Mother Mary Brendan. These are concerning the financial administration of the Sisters' employment at St. Peter's Seminary. There is also correspondence from 2005 and 2018, from Katsu Iguchi, a survivor of the Japanese internment camps in British Columbia, wishing the Sisters of St. Joseph a happy Christmas and thanking them for the care they gave him while working at St. Peter's Seminary. There are news clippings from St. Peter's Seminary, *The Alumni Bulletin,* related to the work of the Sisters, and their move from the Seminary to Mount St. Joseph (also referred to as the Motherhouse). In addition, there is a landscape photograph of the front exterior of St. Peter's Seminary in 1926, and a close-up photograph of a commemorative plaque that was presented to the Sisters of St. Joseph.

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

Arranged by archivist.

Location of originals

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

Restrictions on access

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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]

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Note [General]

On December 14, 1909, Reverend Father Michael Francis Fallon was appointed the Bishop of the Diocese of London, Ontario. Bishop Fallon strongly believed in the value of education and founded St. Peter's Seminary in London. The school officially opened on September 14, 1912, with thirty seminarians who began their studies in theology. The first group of Sisters of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Ontario, appointed to work at St. Peter's Seminary were Sister Aloysia (Rebecca) Nigh (Superior), Sister Baptist Lysaght, Sister Josephine Fallon, and Sister Laurentia Malloy. The original construction plans for St. Peter's Seminary were delayed for thirteen years due to the outbreak of World War I. As a result, the students and faculty resided at Bishop Fallon's home, which was then the rectory at St. Peter's Cathedral Basilica in London. Sister Aloysia Nigh oversaw the maintenance at the Seminary, as well as she directed the building and remodeling of the Sacred Heart Convent, in London, Ontario, which later became the headquarters of the Community in 1914. On May 31, 1925, Bishop Fallon laid the cornerstone for St. Peter's Seminary on Waterloo Street. The land was donated by Sir Philip Pocock, a prominent member of a London Catholic family. Sister Aloysia Nigh had an active role in the construction

process and was instrumental in the building design and layout plans for St. Peter's Seminary. Sister Aloysia Nigh communicated with architects and builders and had practical knowledge and foresight in planning religious houses. The stone decoration and the chapel of St. Thomas Aquinas inside St. Peter's Seminary are recognized for its design features and gothic collegiate architecture.

The official opening ceremony and dedication of St. Peter's Seminary was on September 29, 1926. It was concurrent with the Catholic Centennial Week (September 26 to October 3) celebration of St. Peter's Cathedral Basilica and the growth of the parishes and schools within the London Diocese, and with the Centennial Year of the historic founding of the City of London, Ontario. The group of Sisters of St. Joseph assigned to ministries at the new St. Peter's Seminary were Sister Aloysia (Rebecca) Night, who returned to serve as Superior, Sister Bernadette Kerrigan, Sister Carmelita White, Sister Demetrial Heeney, Sister Francis Borgia Ducharme, and Sister Ida Casey. The Sisters resided at St. Peter's Seminary and helped students prepare for priesthood. The Sisters cultivated an executive level of household management.

The Sisters were employed to maintain and preserve sacred artifacts that held deep symbolism for veneration. They were also responsible for the mending of liturgical vestments and holy garments, as well as performing professional domestic duties of religious significance inside the chapel, priests' suites, and visitors' suites. The Sisters also spent time in culinary planning, running an industrial kitchen and cafeteria dining room, and organizing the storeroom and conducting inventory.

At St. Peter's Seminary, the Sisters also helped a Japanese youth named Katsu Iguchi who arrived from British Columbia to work in the kitchen and dining room from 1944 to 1945. Katsu Iguchi was born in Vancouver in 1923 and passed away in Toronto in 2024. Katsu Iguchi had just finished high school when, in February 1942, at the start of World War Two, the Japanese population was labeled an enemy alien and considered a national security risk by the Canadian government. The Japanese population in western Canada, including Katsu Iguchi, were dispossessed and detained at Japanese internment camps in the interior of British Columbia. The camps had no electricity, no running water, and were enclosed by double barbed wire fencing. Upon his release after several years, Katsu Iguchi was sent to Ontario and worked under the care and guidance of Sister Julien Hinchberger who oversaw the dining room, Sister Leocadia Lowes who oversaw the kitchen, and was mentored by Father Fergus Joseph Laverty, the Seminary Bursar, and Father Anthony Joseph Durand. Katsu Iguchi eventually became a chartered accountant, and never forgot the help from the Fathers and the Sisters at St. Peter's Seminary during a difficult period of the war years. At the age of 95 years, Katsu Iguchi gifted chocolates and sent handwritten letters of deep appreciation to the Sisters of St. Joseph.

In 1973, the Sisters of St. Joseph transferred to their new residence, Mount St. Joseph Motherhouse, in London, Ontario. The Sisters continued to serve at St. Peter's Seminary and commuted daily from Monday to Friday until 1980. Since 1912, many Sisters had worked at St. Peter's Seminary, such as Sister Virginia Lobban who gave 22 years of service from 1958 to 1980. On November 20, 1980, a banquet event was held in honour and remembrance of the Sisters of St. Joseph and their years of service at St. Peter's Seminary. The Sisters were gifted an engraved plaque that read, "In gratitude and deep appreciation for your generous service to St. Peter's Seminary Community." St. Peter's Seminary in 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

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- **Level of detail:** Minimal

- **Status description:** Final

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- Multiple media (documentary form)

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File: F01-S057-02 - Sisters of St. Joseph Employed at St. Peter's Seminary

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File: F01-S057-03 - Photograph of St. Peter's Seminary

Title: Photograph of St. Peter's Seminary

Reference code: F01-S057-03

Date: 1926 (date of creation)

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File: F01-S057-04 - Letter from Katsu Iguchi

Title: Letter from Katsu Iguchi

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