

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

## **Finding Aid - Annals Theophany Community House, London, Ont. series (F01-S058)**

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# Annals Theophany Community House, London, Ont. series

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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 Theophany Community House, London, Ont. series
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<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, January 2025.

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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, 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.

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## Scope and content

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This series contains short histories, minutes, first house meetings, and the quarterly and financial reports of Theophany, an experimental community group of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Ontario, from 1972 to 1983. Various Sisters who were members of Theophany lived first at a house on Grosvenor Street then at Wellington Street in London. They sought personal growth through a communal life of daily group praying and by the spontaneous sharing of their prayer experience. There is a list of Sisters who were stationed at the Theophany Community House from 1972 to 1983 and priests who celebrated Mass for the Sisters at the house from 1972 to 1974. There is correspondence from Mother Mary Brendan, Superior General. One letter is to Sister Loretta Janisse related to her appointment as the Co-Ordinator of the Theophany Community, from 1974 to 1975, and other letters encourage the Theophany Sisters to have co-responsibility and accountability to each other, and to the Community. In addition, there is a printed picture given by Sister Elaine (Marie Noel) Cole in 2020. The printed picture is a photograph of the first group of Sisters who resided at the Theophany Community House that was taken on September 23, 2006, at a social gathering in anticipation of the closing of the Mount St. Joseph Motherhouse in London. In addition, there is a scrapbook that contains photographs with slogans and text cut-out from magazines. Photographs in the scrapbook depict Sisters, priests, and guests at the Theophany Community Houses at Grosvenor Street and at Wellington Street.

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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]

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.

## Note [General]

In 1972, at the General Chapter of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Ontario, the Sisters established two experimental communities within the congregation. The Sisters chose the name Theophany for their meaning the “manifestation of a deity” within a framework of a “Call to Unity,” based on deep maternal relationships of “one mind and heart.” There was a Theophany Community House in Sarnia and one at 255 Grosvenor Street in London, Ontario. The concept of Theophany was rooted in a new approach of intentional conscientious group living. The basic purpose of Theophany was to deepen one’s spiritual life through personal and daily shared social prayer and liturgy sessions. The inaugural Theophany members included Sister Frances (Marie) Walton, who was the co-ordinator from 1972 to 1974, Sister Carol (Theodora) Mittelholtz, Sister Elaine (Marie Noel) Cole, Sister Aletha McCallum, Sister Thecla Martens, and Sister Loretta Janisse. This first group of Sisters moved to Grosvenor Street on August 16, 1972. The Grosvenor Street building was demolished a few months later to build a parking lot for St. Joseph’s Hospital. On November 18, 1972, the Sisters relocated to 870 Wellington Street North in London, where Theophany operated until December 1983. The Sisters had regular community house meetings, periodic evaluation meetings, and wrote individual reports and working papers to the General Council relating goals, efforts, and basic expectations of the Theophany Community. Key components of their training were shared responsibility, common understanding, respecting each other’s differences, supporting each other’s contributions, and working together towards consensus decision-makings affecting the life of the group. The Sisters regularly celebrated liturgy together at the Theophany Community House. London, Ontario is situated on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, L̄naapéewak 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-S058-01 - History, 255 Grosvenor Street

Title: History, 255 Grosvenor Street

Reference code: F01-S058-01

Date: 1972-1974 (date of creation)

: 0382

Location of originals: London Annals Box 14 (0382)

Publication status:

Published

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### File: F01-S058-02 - History, 870 Wellington Street North

Title: History, 870 Wellington Street North

Reference code: F01-S058-02

Date: 1972-1983 (date of creation)

: 0382

Location of originals: London Annals Box 14 (0382)

Publication status:

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### File: F01-S058-03 - History, minutes, correspondence, and a picture

Title: History, minutes, correspondence, and a picture

Reference code: F01-S058-03

Date: 1972-2020 (date of creation)

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### **File: F01-S058-04 - History, drafts**

Title: History, drafts

Reference code: F01-S058-04

Date: 1972-1983 (date of creation)

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### **File: F01-S058-05 - Scrapbook [M-5.4]**

Title: Scrapbook [M-5.4]

Reference code: F01-S058-05

Date: Sept. 1972 – May 1973 (date of creation)

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