

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada

Finding Aid - Barrhead, AB – St. Joseph’s Hospital series (40)

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

Language of description: English

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Barrhead, AB – St. Joseph's Hospital series

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Summary information

Repository:	Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada
Title:	Barrhead, AB – St. Joseph's Hospital series
Reference code:	40
Date:	1947-1991 (creation)
Physical description:	8 cm of textual records 2 photographs : col. 8 photographs : b&w

Administrative history / Biographical sketch

Note

The Sisters of St. Joseph for the Diocese of Pembroke in Canada was first incorporated by letters patent dated January 21, 1922 under the Ontario Companies Act. The town of Pembroke, Ontario is located on the traditional lands of the Algonquin and Anishinaabe Peoples.

In 1910, Sisters from Peterborough began teaching at St. Michael's Parish school in Douglas, followed by Killaloe in 1915 and Mount St. Patrick in 1916, all three being small rural communities in Ontario. Eleven years later, on August 25, 1921, a new community was formed at Bishop Ryan's request by 27 Sisters from Peterborough. 14 of these Sisters were already serving in Douglas, Killaloe, and Mount St. Patrick. Mother Vincent Carroll was elected General Superior.

The new community needed a motherhouse, and the O'Kelly farm was purchased by Bishop Ryan, giving the Sisters 40 acres of farmland and 107 acres of woods on the Ottawa River, along with an old farmhouse. On September 19, 1921 St. Joseph's-on-the-Lake, the first Motherhouse, was officially opened and blessed by Father Dowdall. St. Joseph's Convent, the first mission of the newly formed congregation, was established in Chapeau on August 27, 1921. Here the Sisters taught in the local school for many years.

The Pembroke Sisters spread out throughout Ontario and Quebec, and even made their way westward to Saskatchewan and Alberta. Some other missions included Calabogie (1924), Campbell's Bay (1925), Barry's Bay (1928), Renfrew (1928), Sheenboro (1936), Madawaska (1936), Deep River (1948), Quyon (1951), Des Joachims (1958), Whitney (1958), Bancroft (1959), Ottawa (1962), and Petawawa (1962).

The General Superiors of the Congregation were elected from the ranks of the founding Sisters until 1945 when Mother Magdalen Donegan was elected. She had entered the Congregation in September 1923. At the peak of its membership growth, the Congregation numbered approximately 190.

After three decades, on September 15, 1952, Bishop Smith took part in the sod turning for a new Motherhouse. On April 26, 1953 he blessed the cornerstone. The new motherhouse officially opened on December 12, 1953 – providing a home for years to which Sisters could return from missions outside Pembroke. Many of the convents outside Pembroke housed teachers, as education was a significant ministry. The first classes held at St. Joseph's Academy, a girls' high school in Renfrew, on September 10, 1928. A new building was completed in 1940 and the school stayed open for almost three more decades. In October 1940, the Normal School, later St. Mary's Teachers' College, opened in Chapeau, and saw its

last graduates in 1969. This ministry was unique to the Pembroke Sisters, as no other of our communities provided teacher training.

Following the original thread of the Sisters in Le Puy, the Pembroke Sisters served others in corporal works of mercy through healthcare. On July 25, 1946 Sisters arrived in Radville, Saskatchewan to establish the first hospital, which they administered until 1998. Ten years after opening the hospital, they founded Marian Home to provide long term care, and senior care. Sisters also went to Regina, where they opened Santa Maria Senior Citizens’ Home on October 12, 1968. On January 7, 1947 they assumed the administration and staffing of St. Joseph’s Hospital in Barrhead, Alberta from the Religious Hospitallers of St Joseph. This ministry lasted until 1978.

Closer to home, St. Francis Memorial Hospital in Barry’s Bay, Ontario was opened on October 25, 1960. This hospital was also staffed by the Sisters. Sr. Rosenda Brady, who administered this hospital, later took charge of Valley Manor, a senior’s home in Barry’s Bay, which opened on June 23, 1978. On August 24, 1968, Sisters arrived to administer and staff St. Joseph’s Manor, a home for senior citizens, in Campbell’s Bay, Québec, where they remained until 1982.

There was only a short-lived ministry of orphan care at Villa St. Joseph in Renfrew from 1940 to 1947. In a spirit of adventure, the Sisters set sail to South America on April 17, 1964, to found St. Joseph’s Convent in Chincha Alta, Peru. On the feast day of St. Martin de Porres, November 2, 1964, they opened Clinica San Martin. In the spring of the following year, on April 1, 1965, the parish school opened in Chincha Alta. Classes began at Colegio San Jose in March 1970. On January 1, 1966 Clinica Tom Dooley opened in Chincha Baja.

Still following the thread of the Sisters in Le Puy, the Pembroke Sisters served others in spiritual works of mercy through parish work and spiritual development ministry. On August 15, 1978, Sisters began parish ministry in Penticton (to 1984). In September 1969, St. Joseph Centre, a renewal centre in Chapeau, opened for a brief period, followed in July 1989 by Stillpoint House of Prayer in Springtown, which has seen decades of service.

On November 22, 2012, the congregation amalgamated with those in Hamilton, London, and Peterborough 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 contains records concerning the involvement of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Pembroke with St. Joseph’s Hospital in Barrhead, Alberta. The records cover the establishment of the hospital, the administration and operation of the hospital, the transfer of the hospital, and the Sisters’ involvement with the Catholic Hospital Association and the Alberta Hospital Association. Materials include financial records, agreements for the purchase and sale of property, annals, memoirs, pamphlets, booklets, newsletters, lot maps, hospital floor plans, hospital bylaws, correspondence, and photographs. The major topics within the correspondence include establishing and operating the hospital, finances, the purchase and sale of property, construction and renovations, Catholic hospitals and medical ethics in Alberta, the changing role of Sisters in the hospital, and the relinquishing of ownership of the hospital. The photographs are of the hospital and Sisters at various events and locations.

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 Pembroke.

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

There is a series and file list available.

Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

Note [Sources]

C. Lacroix, *St. Joseph's Hospital, Barrhead, Alberta 1947 – 1978*, unpublished manuscript.

Note [General]

St. Joseph's Hospital, Barrhead, Alberta 1947 – 1978

Barrhead is a prairie town located 180 kilometers northwest of Edmonton. A few settlers had come in 1906 to what was later known as Paddle River. In 1912, a group of Scottish people came to settle nearby. The rapid increase in population in the district led to hospital care being delivered in 1934 by Dr. Yandeau in a small building he erected.

The Sisters of Charity of Halifax, Nova Scotia, took over the administration of this hospital, then known as St. Elizabeth Hospital, travelling several days a week. In 1940, the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph assumed charge of what in future was called St. Joseph's Hospital.

Rev. Father Poirier, pastor of Barrhead, requested Mother Magdalen, then Superior General, to send Sisters from Pembroke to administer and staff the hospital. On January 7, 1947, Sisters Clare O'Gorman, Othelia, Monica Owens, Mary Joseph Poirier, Edith Tallon, and Mary Varney left for Barrhead.

The facilities existed for 30 beds and eight bassinettes, with equipment and staff very limited and poverty much in evidence. Two Sister nurses, with a few personnel who had been well-trained on the job, kept the place operational, serving a large population. There was no resident chaplain, but Father Poirier served as hospital chaplain.

Among the problems facing the Sisters were the language difficulties of the staff. Working hours were long and strenuous. Essential equipment was lacking, thus making the workload more difficult. The Sisters found it difficult to arrange for time off to make the annual retreat. Vacation was of two-week duration every three years. Demands on the Sisters were indeed very great, but they responded joyfully, and in 1955, to their satisfaction, an additional wing was added giving the hospital a capacity of 60 beds. This undertaking was begun by Sister St. Michael and completed by Sister Mary Legris. The official opening took place on November 2, 1955.

As the hospital increased in size, requirements for additional personnel and medical staff became evident. With the discovery of oil at Swan Falls and Virginia Hill, the population of Barrhead grew even more rapidly, necessitating the building of a 20-bed wing, bringing the capacity of the hospital to 80 beds. This new wing opened in 1961.

With the advent of Vatican II and the renewal in religious life, the Sisters relinquished key positions in administration and management. A lay administrator and business manager were appointed. Now that lay people filled the positions as department heads, these Sisters were able to work directly with people.

When the Sisters of St. Joseph took over the operation of the hospital in 1947, Sister Clare was the first administrator, Sister Edith, the dietician, Sister Mary George, the X-ray technician, Sister Emma worked in the general office, and Sister Monica and Sister Mary Joseph worked as nurses, alternating day and night duty. Sister Othelia was in charge of laundry. Out of this nucleus and the pioneering spirit of the first Sisters, there developed the superb modern complex that exists today.

It would be difficult to relate the story of the many sacrifices made by the pioneer Sisters and their successors. Fulfilling the demands of the circumstances of hospital operation at that time was not always easy, but with the support of community members, they persevered and achieved success to a remarkable degree. The very difficulties they faced together served to unite them in the close bonds of friendship and community.

Humour and wit were present and enjoyed in life at St. Joseph's Hospital, Barrhead, through the years. Many interesting stories have been told of the early days, especially of travel by wagon, tractor, boat, car, and basket over the Athabasca River, to attend Mass in a mission chapel.

Within three years of the purchase of the hospital, Sister Clare sent to Sister Borden the last payment of interest in full of the principal. This was made possible by the hard work of the Sisters.

The Sisters who directed the activities of the community during 25 years of apostolate were Sisters Clare, St. Michael, Elizabeth, Magdalen, St. Paul, Mary Denis, Teresa Rice, and Imelda Duquette.

The hospital was sold to the Alberta government in 1974. In 1977, it was mutually agreed by Sister Maria Mousseau, General Superior, that it was time to withdraw completely from Barrhead. Thus ended, on March 30, 1978, 30 years of service by the Sisters of St. Joseph in Barrhead, Alberta.

Other notes

- **Publication status:** Published

- **Level of detail:** Partial
- **Status description:** Final

Access points

- Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada (Pembroke, Ont.)
- Multiple media (documentary form)
- Textual records (documentary form)
- Photographs (documentary form)
- Annals and chronicles (documentary form)
- Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada (Pembroke, Ont.) (subject)
- Alberta (place)

Series descriptions

Series 40-0000: Finance and legal

Date: 1947-1949 (creation)

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Reference code	Title	Dates	Physical description
40-0000-1	File - Land titles – Barrhead		
40-0000-2	File - St. Joseph's Hospital bank statements	1947-1949	

Series 40-0001: Annals

Publication status:

Published

File / item list

Reference code	Title	Dates	Physical description
40-0001-1	File - Annals and memoirs – Barrhead		

Series 40-0002: Correspondence

Date: 1947-1991 (creation)

Publication status:

Published

File / item list			
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Reference code	Title	Dates	Physical description
40-0002-1	File - St. Joseph's Hospital 1947-1949	1947-1949	
40-0002-2	File - St. Joseph's Hospital 1953-1967	1953-1967	
40-0002-3	File - St. Joseph's Hospital 1968-1971	1968-1971	
40-0002-4	File - St. Joseph's Hospital 1972	1972	
40-0002-5	File - St. Joseph's Hospital 1973-1978, 1991	1973-1978, 1991	

Series 40-0003: Newsclippings and photographs

Publication status:

Published

File / item list			
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Reference code	Title	Dates	Physical description
40-0003-1	File - St. Joseph's Hospital newsclippings		
40-0003-2	File - Photographs – Barrhead		

Series 40-0004: Association membership

Publication status:

Published

File / item list			
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Reference code	Title	Dates	Physical description
40-0004-1	File - Alberta Hospital Association		
40-0004-2	File - Catholic Hospital Association		