

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

## **Finding Aid - Missions Ottawa series (50-0018)**

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# Missions Ottawa 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>	Missions Ottawa series
<b>Reference code:</b>	50-0018
<b>Date:</b>	1964-2001 (creation)
<b>Physical description:</b>	4 cm of textual records 81 photographs : b&w 137 photographs : col.
<b>Dates of creation, revision and deletion:</b>	27-Sep-23

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## Administrative history / Biographical sketch

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### 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.

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## Scope and content

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This series contains records related to the Ottawa, Ontario houses and ministries of the Sisters of St. Joseph in the Pembroke diocese. The records contain annals, correspondence, photographs, and records related to renovations and property purchase such as invoices and a deed for the Wilbrod Street building. The annals are for Emmaus (Argyle Street) house, the Hull house, Laetare house, the Lebrun Street house, and the Wilbrod Street house. The Wilbrod Street house and the Lebrun Street house files contain a small number of photographs of the Sisters who lived at these houses as they took part in daily life, special events, and trips. Another file for Wilbrod Street contains a large number of photographs that were removed from an album, and depict the building, Sisters ministering in the community, and daily life. The series is interesting in that it shows experiments the Sisters undertook in community living and in vocation work.

## 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 created by the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph (Pembroke, Ont.).

### 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 [General]

Emmaus House was an experiment in community living with the goals of shared decision making and responsibilities for rent, food, utilities, and housekeeping and meal preparation. The idea was to live as women in community rather than just women sharing a residence. Emmaus House began in Ottawa, with two Sisters and four other young women. These founding members moved into rented accommodation at 178 Argyle on August 22, 1977. From 1978-1979, Emmaus House was located at 81 Stewart Street, with some new members, and the next year at 80 Daly, again with some new members. This is where Emmaus House remained until 1985-1986, when three of the founding members moved to 518 Besserer Street. Through the years, the women at Emmaus House grappled with the concept of communal life, sharing tasks and prayer and meals, and supported each other, reaching out to take part in the wider community through discussion of issues such as nuclear war, and involvement in some municipal campaigns such as

that of Marion Dewar. As the 1982-1983 annals for Emmaus House note, "Many a community evening we spent around the kitchen table that year trying to identify the particular nature of the community. After much searching, those of us who had been in the community over the years recognized that we carried a charism that was unique to our experience. It was not simply that we came together to try and find the common denominator among all present. Our history had shaped our spirituality and particular community values."

Laetare House at 160 Clemow Avenue in Ottawa was opened in September 1973 as a house for girls interested in religious life. Initially, the purpose of Laetare House was to provide community living with a spiritual orientation for young women with an interest in religious life, and to help them discern whether they had a religious vocation, and if so, to help them realize this vocation. The Sisters who lived there were to serve as role models, take responsibility to ensure a nurturing home atmosphere, share in decision making, assess the suitability of girls in residence, and share housekeeping duties. The girls were to take part in prayer, spiritual direction, and be encouraged in apostolic activities, as well as to share a community night each week. By 1975, it was decided to change the focus to providing a residence for girls wishing to live in a Christian community because of the difficulty in finding young women interested in entering religious life, and the fact that those who had entered Laetere House felt pressure in trying to discern a vocation while trying to adjust to community life. After two years of this project, it was decided to sell this house which the Sisters had purchased in the spring of 1975.

In 1975, the General Council of the Pembroke community gave permission to two Sisters to open a house in Hull in the area in which they were working, so that a special ministry with the girls at D'Arcy High School might be carried out.

On July 16, 1987, the Sisters opened a shared residence in rented accommodation at 161 Lebrun Street in Vanier, Ontario to assist with carrying out their ministries, to offer hospitality, and to provide space for reflection. Two Sisters lived there over the years.

Beginning on June 27, 1975, three Sisters rented a semi-detached house at 142 Mutchmore Street in Hull, Quebec to engage in a ministry with girls at D'Arcy McGee High School where they taught. The idea was to introduce young women to aspects of religious life, and to enable them to experience Christian living, at the same time giving them support with the problems and pressures they experienced in their lives.

The Sisters shared Tuesday and Thursday overnight evenings with groups of four students who would choose an activity such as swimming, bowling, attending a show, or visiting Alleluia House, a Vanier home for the mentally disabled. The evening would end with a sing-song before bed. A parish priest would celebrate Mass in the house several evenings in the month, and all parishioners were invited to attend. In 1976, the Sisters dispersed although one Sister remained living in an apartment on Mutchmore Street. She continued to invite students to her apartment to get to know them outside of the classroom and to influence them toward fuller Christian development through prayer and informal discussion. The girls took trips to a Theresian convention, a girls' retreat, and a youth day among other activities. Interest in the overnight stays among students waned in 1977, and this Sister's ministry changed into organizing short summer trips for senior Sisters to various points of interest in 1978.

Sisters who taught at St. Pius X High School in Ottawa refunded a part of their salary to the school. The Sisters taught at this school from 1974 to 1989.

The longest running house in Ottawa was at 476 Wilbrod Street which had been purchased in August 1962 when Sister Mary McGaghran was General Superior. The building underwent extensive renovations to accommodate twenty Sisters and to include a chapel. The House was located close to the University of Ottawa and served as a Juniorate and residence for Sisters undertaking studies, as well as a place of hospitality for visiting Sisters and those convalescing from illness. Through the years, the Sisters at Wilbrod Street took part in the activities of St. Joseph's parish including teaching religion to public school students, home visiting, and participation in Folk Masses. In the early years, a vocation project

was initiated by bringing in high school girls in small groups every week or so to have supper followed by swimming or bowling and staying overnight. Sisters living at Wilbrod Street had a variety of ministries including serving as high school teachers and administrative staff, nurses, social workers, or being engaged in academic studies. Several Sisters resided at Wilbrod Street while they were learning Spanish before departing for Peru. A tradition began of inviting a needy family for Christmas dinner during this time. During the 1990s, Wilbrod Street became well-established as a hospitality house, hosting both lay visitors, boarders, international visitors, and Sisters from other congregations. The Sisters' time at the Wilbrod Street House came to an end on May 18, 2001, and the building was sold that year.

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

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## Series descriptions

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Reference code	Title	Dates	Physical description
50-0018-1	<b>File - Argyle Street House (Emmaus)</b>	1977-1986	
50-0018-2	<b>File - Hull PQ House</b>	1975-1978	
50-0018-3	<b>File - Laetare House</b>	1973-1975	
50-0018-4	<b>File - Lebrun Street House</b>	1987-1990	
50-0018-5	<b>File - Wilbrod Street House Annals</b>	1973-2001	
50-0018-6	<b>File - 476 Wilbrod Street photos [album E]</b>	1964	
50-0018-7	<b>File - Wilbrod Street House and chapel</b>		
50-0018-8	<b>File - St. Pius X High School</b>		