

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada

Finding Aid - Oral histories series (F01-S098)

Generated by Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada on November 13, 2025

Language of description: English

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Oral histories series

Table of contents

Summary information	3
Administrative history / Biographical sketch	3
Scope and content	5
Notes	5
Access points	6
Collection holdings	6
F01-S098-01, Correspondence (2004)	6
F01-S098-02, Oral History Interviews (1992-1993)	7

Summary information

Repository:	Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada
Title:	Oral histories series
Reference code:	F01-S098
Date:	1992-2004 (creation)
Physical description:	5.1 cm of textual records 5 computer disks ; 9 x 9 cm
Language:	English
Dates of creation, revision and deletion:	November 15, 2018July 2, 2020May 22, 2023September 30, 2025

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, 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.

Scope and content

The series contains oral histories and autobiographies of some of the Sisters of St. Joseph in the London Diocese. Many of the oral histories included were conducted for the Federation Collaborative History Project. The Federation includes the Congregations of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Toronto, Hamilton, London, Peterborough, Pembroke, and Sault Ste. Marie. The oral histories included in the Federation project are those of a select few Sisters. These Sisters are Noella Armstrong, Mary Doyle, Augustine Long, Margaret Ferris, and Cathleen Flynn. The Sisters discussed memories of their childhood and their lives before entering the convent, the call to service, and stories of their years preparing to become a professed Sister. This series includes digital and printed transcripts of oral history interviews with the Sisters, e-mail correspondence regarding the Federation oral history project, and a newspaper clipping.

Notes

Title notes

- **Source of title proper:** Title is based on the contents of the series.

Immediate source of acquisition

Records transferred from the Congregation to the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada Archives - London site.

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.

Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

Other notes

- **Publication status:** Published
 - **Level of detail:** Partial
 - **Status description:** Revised
 - **Accompanying material:** Reference copies of the digitized audio recordings from the project and PDF transcripts, deposit agreements, questionnaires, and data sheets were provided by the U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph Archive. These are stored as Accession 2025-21.
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Access points

- Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada (London, Ont.)
 - Flynn, Cathleen (subject)
 - Ferris, Margaret (subject)
 - Textual record (documentary form)
 - Textual records (documentary form)
 - Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada (London, Ont.) (subject)
 - London (place)
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Collection holdings

Subseries: F01-S098-01 - Correspondence

Title: Correspondence

Reference code: F01-S098-01

Date: 2004 (date of creation)

Scope and content: This sub-series contains records related to the oral history project conducted by the Federation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Canada. It contains correspondence between Sister Mary Zimmer, the archivist at the time, and various people connected to the project. One e-mail concerns the creation and transfer of the transcripts of the oral history interviews conducted as part of the Federation Collaborative History Project.

Physical description: 0.1 cm of textual records

: 0450

Location of originals: Box 1 (0450)

Publication status:

Published

Access points:

- Textual record (documentary form)
-

File: F01-S098-01-01 - Correspondence re: Oral Histories

Title: Correspondence re: Oral Histories

Reference code: F01-S098-01-01

Date: 2004 (date of creation)

Physical description: 0.1 cm of textual records

Publication status:

Published

Subseries: F01-S098-02 - Oral History Interviews

Title: Oral History Interviews

Reference code: F01-S098-02

Date: 1992-1993 (date of creation)

Scope and content: This sub-series contains transcripts of oral history interviews and digital copies on computer disks. The oral histories are first-hand accounts of the Sisters' personal, and religious lives with prompts and questions from the interviewer. The oral history interviews were conducted by Sister Marjorie FitzPatrick for the Federation. The oral history interviews of Sisters Noella Armstrong, Mary Doyle, Augustine Long, and Margaret Ferris took place in London, Ontario in November, 1992. Sister Cathleen Flynn's interview took place at Morrow Park in Toronto, Ontario in March, 1993.

Physical description: 5 computer disks ; 9 x 9 cm
5 cm of textual records

Publication status:

Published

Access points:

- Textual record (documentary form)
-

File: F01-S098-02-01 - Flynn, Cathleen

Title: Flynn, Cathleen

Reference code: F01-S098-02-01

Date: 1993 (date of creation)

Physical description: 1 cm of textual records

1 computer disks ; 9 x 9 cm

: 0450

Location of originals: Box 1 (0450)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S098-02-02 - Armstrong, Noella

Title: Armstrong, Noella

Reference code: F01-S098-02-02

Date: 1992 (date of creation)

Physical description: 1 cm of textual records

1 computer disks ; 9 x 9 cm

: 0450

Location of originals: Box 1 (0450)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S098-02-03 - Doyle, Mary

Title: Doyle, Mary

Reference code: F01-S098-02-03

Date: 1992 (date of creation)

Physical description: 1 cm of textual records

1 computer disks ; 9 x 9 cm

: 0450

Location of originals: Box 1 (0450)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S098-02-04 - Long, Augustine

Title: Long, Augustine

Reference code: F01-S098-02-04

Date: 1992 (date of creation)

Physical description: 1 cm of textual records
1 computer disks ; 9 x 9 cm

: 0450

Location of originals: Box 1 (0450)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S098-02-05 - Ferris, Margaret

Title: Ferris, Margaret

Reference code: F01-S098-02-05

Date: 1992 (date of creation)

Physical description: 1 cm of textual records
1 computer disks ; 9 x 9 cm

: 0450

Location of originals: Box 1 (0450)

Publication status:

Published
