

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada

Finding Aid - Receptions and professions series (F01-S101)

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Receptions and professions series

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Summary information

Repository:	Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada
Title:	Receptions and professions series
Reference code:	F01-S101
Date:	1871-2006 (creation)
Date:	1871-2006 (creation)
Physical description:	54.5 cm of textual records (17 volumes) 39 photographs : b&w 11 photographs : col.
Dates of creation, revision and deletion:	2024/03/2024 Revised 2025/04/02 by Rhiannon Allen-Roberts

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

This series contains material related to the receptions and professions of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of London, Ontario. The records are primarily concerned with Sisters who had their receptions and professions in London, Ontario and at the mission in Edmonton, Alberta. This series includes records related to the vows and vow ceremonies, which are the rituals involved in becoming a member of a religious community. These ceremony records include correspondence, invitations, seating charts, guest lists, and forms of vows. The first receptions occurred at Mount Hope which was the Sisters' first motherhouse in London, and a historical summary of those early ceremonies is present. There are also scripts for speeches and homilies and written accounts. Photographs, prayers, and ephemera including booklets, programs, and newspaper clippings from these ceremonies are also present. One photograph is of the reception of a class of Sisters who had been recruited from Ireland by Sister Julia Moore. One pamphlet is from the 1987 Profession of the Sisters of St. Michael the Archangel of the Diocese of Ekiti, Nigeria. Various lists of Sisters' ceremony dates, stages of religious life, deaths and withdrawals are also included. The vows present here are primarily in bound volumes, though some are on individual sheets of paper. Many of the volumes have related correspondence, renewals, or scripts for the vows (referred to as forms) tucked or pasted within. The vows are generally formulaic, though some are unique. Some, mainly first vows, list the Sisters' hometown, age, and parents.

Notes

Title notes

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

Immediate source of acquisition

These records were transferred to the archives by the congregational leadership.

Arrangement

Order was imposed by the archivist. Some volumes of textual records had an existing order which, when present, was followed.

Location of originals

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

Restrictions on access

F01-S101-01-02 and F01-S101-04-01 contain material which is restricted from public access due to privacy concerns of identifying information for withdrawals.

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

Subseries F01-S101-04 Irish Sisters was an accrual added on April 2, 2025, from accession 2025-18. No further accruals are expected.

Note [Sources]

Caillouette, Theresa Marie, pers. comm.
Stafford, Catherine, pers. comm. 2025/04/02.

Note [General]

Receptions and professions (also referred to as vows) are critical rituals of becoming a Sister of St. Joseph of the Diocese of London, Ontario. The first step was to become a postulant, during which time a woman would enter the motherhouse and begin learning and living by the constitution of the Sisters of St. Joseph. After a minimum of six months, the postulancy ended and the reception occurred. At the reception ceremony, a postulant dressed in a wedding gown as a bride of Christ, made the reception agreement, received her religious name, and received the Holy Habit. She was then a novice and began the canonical year, a one-year period where she would take no work outside the community and would study the charism, vows, and life of the Sisters of St. Joseph. In her second year, a novice could do outside ministry but could not fill professional roles, such as a nurse. After around two years, a novice would take first vows, sometimes referred to as temporary vows. As a postulant and novice, the prospective Sisters lived in the novitiate, a wing of the motherhouse, and after taking the first vows she would move to the juniorate for three to six years. During this time, she would renew her temporary vows annually. Then came the final vows, also called the perpetual profession, in which she would officially become a professed Sister.

The process to become a Sister varies over time, usually regarding terminology and time requirements. However, the main elements of receptions, first vows, and final vows remain consistent. The Sisters' vows were of chastity, poverty, and obedience and were made to dedicate themselves to religious life. The vows generally follow similar formulas at each stage, though some Sisters did write unique individual vows. Receptions and professions ceremonies were usually held in the chapel of the respective motherhouse or at a local basilica with the General Superior and a bishop present. Locations for the ceremonies in London, Ontario include but are not limited to Mount Hope Motherhouse, Sacred Heart Convent, Mount St. Joseph Motherhouse, and St. Peter's Basilica. The ceremonies at the mission in Edmonton, Alberta were held at Sacred Heart Convent.

Other notes

- **Publication status:** Published
 - **Level of detail:** Partial
 - **Status description:** Revised
-

Access points

- Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada (London, Ont.)
 - Multiple media (documentary form)
 - Textual records (documentary form)
 - Photographs (documentary form)
 - Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada (London, Ont.) (subject)
 - London (place)
 - Edmonton (place)
-

Collection holdings

Subseries: F01-S101-01 - Vows in London, Ontario

Title: Vows in London, Ontario

Reference code: F01-S101-01

Date: 1871-2006 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-01-01 - Receptions and professions vol. 1 R1

Title: Receptions and professions vol. 1 R1

Reference code: F01-S101-01-01

Date: 1871 –1919 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-01-02 - Receptions and professions vol. 2 R2

Title: Receptions and professions vol. 2 R2

Reference code: F01-S101-01-02

Date: 1914 –1925 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-01-03 - Receptions and professions vol. 3 R3 P

Title: Receptions and professions vol. 3 R3 P

Reference code: F01-S101-01-03

Date: 1925 - 1947 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-01-04 - Reception and final profession book 4 R4

Title: Reception and final profession book 4 R4

Reference code: F01-S101-01-04

Date: 1947- 1957 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-01-05 - Reception of Sisters book 5 R5

Title: Reception of Sisters book 5 R5

Reference code: F01-S101-01-05

Date: 1956- 1962 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-01-06 - Novices agreement and reception form book 6 R6

Title: Novices agreement and reception form book 6 R6

Reference code: F01-S101-01-06

Date: 1962- 2000 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-01-07 - Record of first vows and renewals vol. I V1

Title: Record of first vows and renewals vol. I V1

Reference code: F01-S101-01-07

Date: 1914-1933 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-01-08 - Record of first vows and renewals vol. II V2

Title: Record of first vows and renewals vol. II V2

Reference code: F01-S101-01-08

Date: 1931-1950 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-01-09 - Record of first vows and renewals vol. III V3

Title: Record of first vows and renewals vol. III V3

Reference code: F01-S101-01-09

Date: 1949-1963 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-01-10 - Record and act of profession for first annual vows and renewals V4

Title: Record and act of profession for first annual vows and renewals V4

Reference code: F01-S101-01-10

Date: 1959-1970 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-01-11 - Record and act of profession for first vows V5Title: Record and act of profession for first vows V5Reference code: F01-S101-01-11Date: 1971-2005 (date of creation)Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-01-12 - Acts of profession of final vows P1Title: Acts of profession of final vows P1Reference code: F01-S101-01-12Date: 1955- 1986 (date of creation)Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-01-13 - Acts of final professionTitle: Acts of final professionReference code: F01-S101-01-13Date: 1972-1997, 2006 (date of creation)Publication status:

Published

Subseries: F01-S101-02 - Vows in Edmonton, AlbertaTitle: Vows in Edmonton, AlbertaReference code: F01-S101-02Date: 1923-1945 (date of creation)Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-02-01 - Book of reception of the Sisters of St. Joseph RE

Title: Book of reception of the Sisters of St. Joseph RE

Reference code: F01-S101-02-01

Date: 1923-1940 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-02-02 - Book of final vows of the Sisters of St. Joseph R4 PE

Title: Book of final vows of the Sisters of St. Joseph R4 PE

Reference code: F01-S101-02-02

Date: 1924-1945 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-02-03 - Act of first profession and renewals R3 VE

Title: Act of first profession and renewals R3 VE

Reference code: F01-S101-02-03

Date: 1926-1944 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

Subseries: F01-S101-03 - Ceremonies

Title: Ceremonies

Reference code: F01-S101-03

Date: 1947-2006 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-03-01 - List of Sisters' receptions

Title: List of Sisters' receptions

Reference code: F01-S101-03-01

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-03-02 - Record of members

Title: Record of members

Reference code: F01-S101-03-02

Date: 1965-2000 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-03-03 - Written accounts and homilies

Title: Written accounts and homilies

Reference code: F01-S101-03-03

Date: 1947-1980 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-03-04 - Ceremonials, vow formulas, and forms

Title: Ceremonials, vow formulas, and forms

Reference code: F01-S101-03-04

Date: 1955-1982 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-03-05 - Profession booklets

Title: Profession booklets

Reference code: F01-S101-03-05

Date: 1954-1997 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-03-06 - Booklets and programs

Title: Booklets and programs

Reference code: F01-S101-03-06

Date: 1965-2006 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-03-07 - St. Peter's Basilica ceremony

Title: St. Peter's Basilica ceremony

Reference code: F01-S101-03-07

Date: 1967 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-03-08 - News clippings and photograph

Title: News clippings and photograph

Reference code: F01-S101-03-08

Date: 1929-1974 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-03-09 - Photographs

Title: Photographs

Reference code: F01-S101-03-09

Date: 1948-1973 (date of creation)

Scope and content: This series is a visual representation of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in London, Ontario during their western ministry in the Edmonton Diocese. The series contains photographs of the Sisters at the closing of the Regional House from June 29 to July 2, 2001. On October 2, 2000, there was a ribbon cutting ceremony, in which the keys and blueprint of the Regional House were handed over to the new property owners, the Birzgalis family. The Bizgalis' transformed the building into the Venta Nursing Home, a long-term care facility, and some aging Sisters received care there. In the photographs, the Sisters who were living at the Regional House at the time of it's closing wore corsages and were seated in the front pew during the closing ceremonies. Also in the photographs, there were items presented which were on display that related to the outstanding achievements and historical milestones of the Sisters' legacy in the West. Activities of the Sisters in the photographs include sharing stories and memories from the past in small groups, gathering in the community room to reminisce, delivering homilies, playing the organ, standing in the chapel, sitting at tables and conversing in the dining hall, walking in a procession, and reminiscing and chatting in the hallway. In addition, in the photographs, Sister Mary Diesbourg gave a special prayer, a welcoming speech, and led the singing of the anthem, O' Canada to recognize July 1st on Canada Day. The Sisters who attended the four-day long event that are depicted in the photographs include: Joan Atkinson, Theresa Marie Caillouette, Alice Caza, Mary Diesbourg, Mary Josephine Fox, Marilyn Keuber, Connie Kuefler, Loretta Manzara, Diane Naud, Therese (Tess) Carmel Slavik, Ethel Steinkey, Nancy Wales, and Mary Zimmer. There is also one photograph of the front door at St. Joseph's Convent Regional House in Edmonton dated 1997. In addition, there are four photo albums documenting events that the Sisters participated in at the St. Joseph's Convent Regional House such as: the opening of the Regional House, in 1961; Christmas, in 1998; Sister Immolata Meyen, an artist from Germany, who made paintings from 1997 to 1998; Halloween, in 2000; and the celebration of the 350th Anniversary of the Le Puy Foundation on September 24, 2000.

Physical description: 30 photographs: col.

1 album (62 photographs: col., and 88 photographs: b&w)

1 album (82 photographs: col., and 7 photographs: b&w)

1 album (85 photographs: col.)

1 album (40 photographs: col.)

Publication status:

Published

Access points:

- Multiple media (documentary form)
-

File: F01-S101-03-09-01 - Closing of St. Joseph's Convent Regional House June 29-July 2, 2001

Title: Closing of St. Joseph's Convent Regional House June 29-July 2, 2001

Reference code: F01-S101-03-09-01

Date: 1997-2001 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

Fonds: F01-S101-03-09-02 - Edmonton History 1927-1980 compiled by Sister Winnifred DownsW-2 [photo album]

Title: Edmonton History 1927-1980 compiled by Sister Winnifred DownsW-2 [photo album]

Reference code: F01-S101-03-09-02

Date: 1927-1980 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

Fonds: F01-S101-03-09-03 - Edmonton Events I 1984-1985 includes Pope John Paul II Visit W-2.3 [photo album]

Title: Edmonton Events I 1984-1985 includes Pope John Paul II Visit W-2.3 [photo album]

Reference code: F01-S101-03-09-03

Date: 1962-1985 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

Fonds: F01-S101-03-09-04 - Edmonton Events II 1998-1999 compiled by Sister Dolores O'Sullivan W-2.4 [photo album]

Title: Edmonton Events II 1998-1999 compiled by Sister Dolores O'Sullivan W-2.4 [photo album]

Reference code: F01-S101-03-09-04

Date: 1998-2000 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

Fonds: F01-S101-03-09-05 - Edmonton Visit 1997-1998 artist Sister Immolata Meyen of Germany W-2.7 [photo album]

Title: Edmonton Visit 1997-1998 artist Sister Immolata Meyen of Germany W-2.7 [photo album]

Reference code: F01-S101-03-09-05

Date: 1997-1999 (date of creation)

Publication status:

Published

Subseries: F01-S101-04 - Irish Sisters

Title: Irish Sisters

Reference code: F01-S101-04

Date: Aug. 25, 1958 (date of creation)

Physical description: 1 photograph : b&w.

Publication status:

Published

File: F01-S101-04-01 - Irish Sisters reception

Title: Irish Sisters reception

Reference code: F01-S101-04-01

Date: Aug. 25, 1958 (date of creation)

Physical description: 1 photograph : b&w.

Publication status:

Published
