

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada

Finding Aid - Diocese of London School of Christ series (F01-S127)

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Diocese of London School of Christ series

Table of contents

Summary information	3
Administrative history / Biographical sketch	3
Scope and content	5
Notes	5
Access points	6
Collection holdings	7
F01-S127-01, Memorabilia and Photographs (1944-[19--])	7
F01-S127-02, Photographs (1942-1946)	8
F01-S127-03, Alumni Recognition (1971)	9
F01-S127-04, Oral History (19-?)	9

Summary information

Repository:	Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada
Title:	Diocese of London School of Christ series
Reference code:	F01-S127
Date:	1943-1971 (creation)
Physical description:	0.5 cm of textual records 31 photographs : b&w 2 photographs : col. 1 audio cassette (ca. 60 min.) 1 vinyl plaque and metal plate
Language:	English
Dates of creation, revision and deletion:	July 2, 2020May 22, 2023

Administrative history / Biographical sketch

Note

The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of London, in Ontario was first incorporated on February 15, 1891 under chapter 92 of the Statutes of Ontario, 1870-1.

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

Series contains of bulletins, newsletters, and newspaper clippings discussing the School of Christ program. It also contains a variety of photographs depicting its participants and organizers. There is one audio cassette of Sister Mary Margaret Childs, director of the senior choir, talking about her memories of the program, and one vinyl plaque presented to Sisters Mary Margaret Childs and Maureen Dalton from a group of alumni.

Notes

Title notes

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

Immediate source of acquisition

The records were collected by members of the Congregation and transferred to the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada - London site archives.

Location of originals

The records are stored off-site in London, Ontario.

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]

The Monsignor W. T. Flannery Radio and Television Broadcasts, known as the “School of Christ,” was a radio and television program that aired from 1939 to 1963. Founded by Monsignor W.T. Flannery, the radio broadcast was transmitted from the Chapel of the Sacred Heart Convent in London, Ontario encouraged by Sister Constance Dunn, as General Superior. The program made its debut on CFPL Radio in London, Ontario, on December 3, 1939. Named after a phrase from the writings of St. Augustine, the program’s stated purpose was to educate people about the true Catholic faith as a way of combating anti-Catholic prejudice. The 30-minute long program aired on Sunday afternoons and consisted of Msgr. Flannery providing catechetical instruction and a question and answer segment with schoolchildren. There were also musical performances by the “School of Christ Choristers” formed by Sister Mary Margaret Childs. The School of Christ Choristers consisted of a senior choir, of women aged 18 years and older, directed by Sister Mary Margaret Childs from 1939 to 1963, as well as a Junior Choir, known as the “Little Radio Choir,” composed of Grade 6 to 8 students, later directed by Sister Marie Brebeuf Beninger. Originally a local broadcast, the School of Christ became syndicated in Toronto, Chatham, and Windsor in 1940. Soon after, it extended into the states of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and New York. At one point, the program was estimated to have had a potential listening audience of 10 million people, many of them non-Catholics. Starting in the mid-1950s, the programs were taped in advance and broadcast on CFPL-TV until 1963, when Msgr. Flannery retired.

Members of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph played an instrumental role in the formation and operation of the program. Sister Constance Dunn encouraged the formation of the program during her term as the Congregation’s General Superior. Sisters Marie Brebeuf Beninger, Mary Margaret Childs, and Maureen Dalton participated in the direction of the show’s choirs, while Sister Callistus Arnsby provided accompaniment. Although the primary forum for these choirs to perform was through radio and television, they also gave annual live concerts in a variety of venues, including London’s Grand Theatre, the auditorium at H.B. Beal Technical School, and Toronto’s Massey Hall Theatre in 1964.

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)
- Photographs (documentary form)
- Textual records (documentary form)
- Physical objects (documentary form)
- Audio (documentary form)
- Education and learning (subject)
- Religion and religious people (subject)

- Music (subject)
 - Women and girls (subject)
 - Radio (subject)
 - Television -- Canada (subject)
 - Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada (London, Ont.) (subject)
 - History (subject)
 - London (place)
-

Collection holdings

Subseries: F01-S127-01 - Memorabilia and Photographs

Title: Memorabilia and Photographs

Reference code: F01-S127-01

Date: 1944-[19--] (date of creation)

Scope and content: The subseries consists of bulletins, newspaper and magazine articles, histories, and photographs depicting the School of Christ program. Some records have been photocopied from the originals.

Physical description: 0.5 cm of textual records

27 photographs : b&w

1 photograph : col.

Publication status:

published

Access points:

- Graphic material (documentary form)
 - Textual record (documentary form)
-

File: F01-S127-01-01 - Monsignor W.T. Flannery Newspaper Clippings, Bulletins, and Photographs 1944-1945, 1963

Title: Monsignor W.T. Flannery Newspaper Clippings, Bulletins, and Photographs 1944-1945, 1963

Reference code: F01-S127-01-01

Publication status:

published

File: F01-S127-01-02 - Photographs, Programs, and Articles

Title: Photographs, Programs, and Articles

Reference code: F01-S127-01-02

Publication status:

published

File: F01-S127-01-03 - Media: Newsclippings and Photographs

Title: Media: Newsclippings and Photographs

Reference code: F01-S127-01-03

Publication status:

published

Subseries: F01-S127-02 - Photographs

Title: Photographs

Reference code: F01-S127-02

Date: 1942-1946 (date of creation)

Scope and content: The subseries consists of four framed black and white photographs. The photographs include two of "The Class" (1942-1943 and 1945-1946), and two of the choirs: one of the "Little Radio Choir" (1943-1944), and one of "The Choristers" (1944-1945).

Physical description: 4 photographs : b&w, framed

Publication status:

published

Access points:

- Graphic material (documentary form)
-

File: F01-S127-02-01 - Framed Photographs [2012-61]

Title: Framed Photographs [2012-61]

Reference code: F01-S127-02-01

Publication status:

published

Subseries: F01-S127-03 - Alumni Recognition

Title: Alumni Recognition

Reference code: F01-S127-03

Date: 1971 (date of creation)

Scope and content: The subseries contains one vinyl plaque made from an audio disc with a photograph of Monsignor Flannery in the centre. The accompanying metal plate is not attached to the plaque. The subseries also contains one color photograph of the plaque showing how it was originally on a wooden mount.

Physical description: 1 photograph : col.
1 vinyl plaque and metal plate

Publication status:

published

Access points:

- Graphic material (documentary form)
 - Object (documentary form)
-

File: F01-S127-03-01 - Award from the Alumni - 1971

Title: Award from the Alumni - 1971

Reference code: F01-S127-03-01

Publication status:

published

Subseries: F01-S127-04 - Oral History

Title: Oral History

Reference code: F01-S127-04

Date: 19-? (date of creation)

Scope and content: The subseries consists of one audio cassette of Sister Mary Margaret Childs, who founded the School of Christ Choristers, talking about her memories of the program.

Physical description: 1 audio cassette (ca. 60 min.)

Publication status:

published

Access points:

- Sound recording (documentary form)
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File: F01-S127-04-01 - School of Christ (memories) Sr. Mary Margaret Childs M14

Title: School of Christ (memories) Sr. Mary Margaret Childs M14

Reference code: F01-S127-04-01

Publication status:

published
