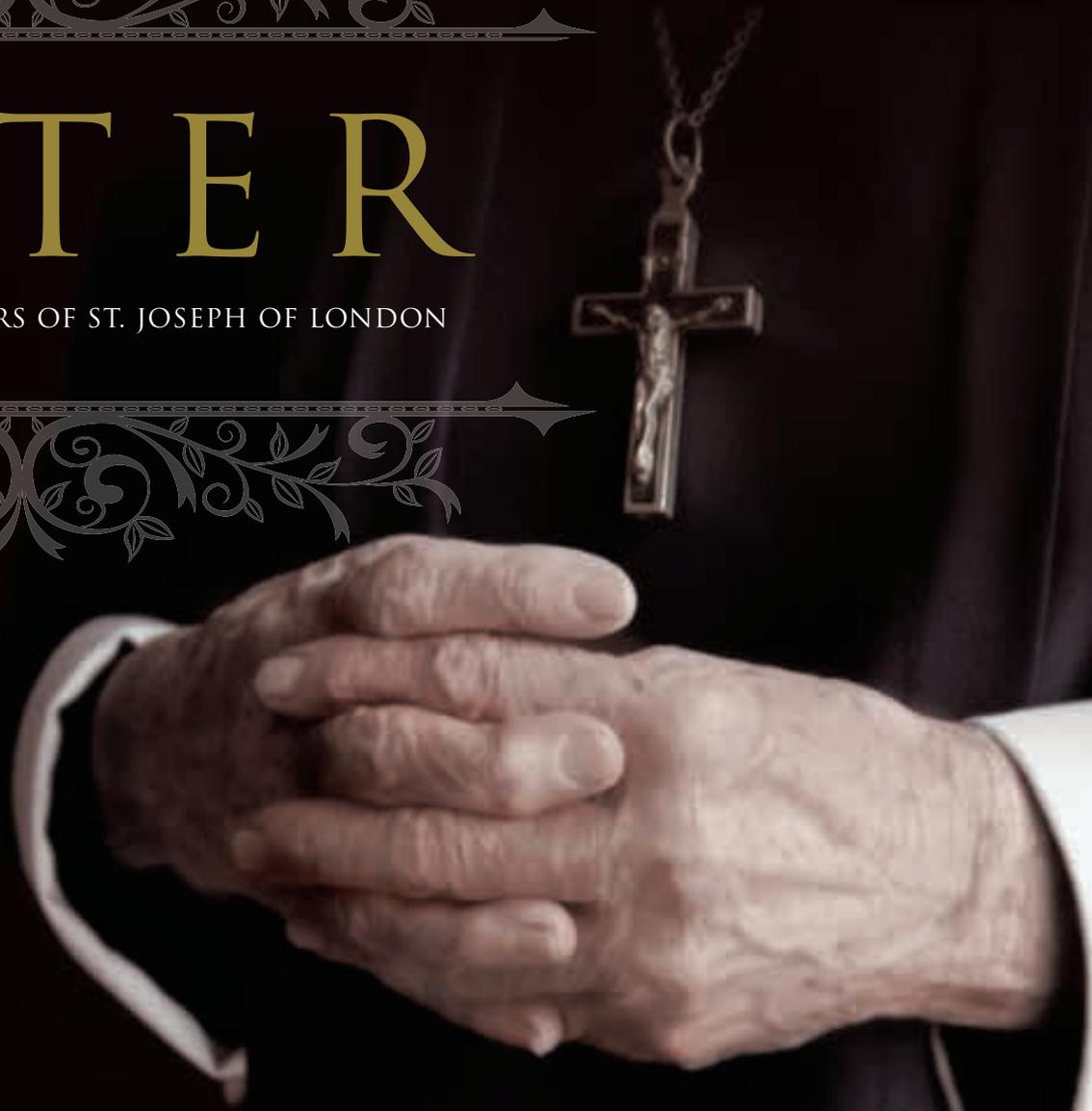
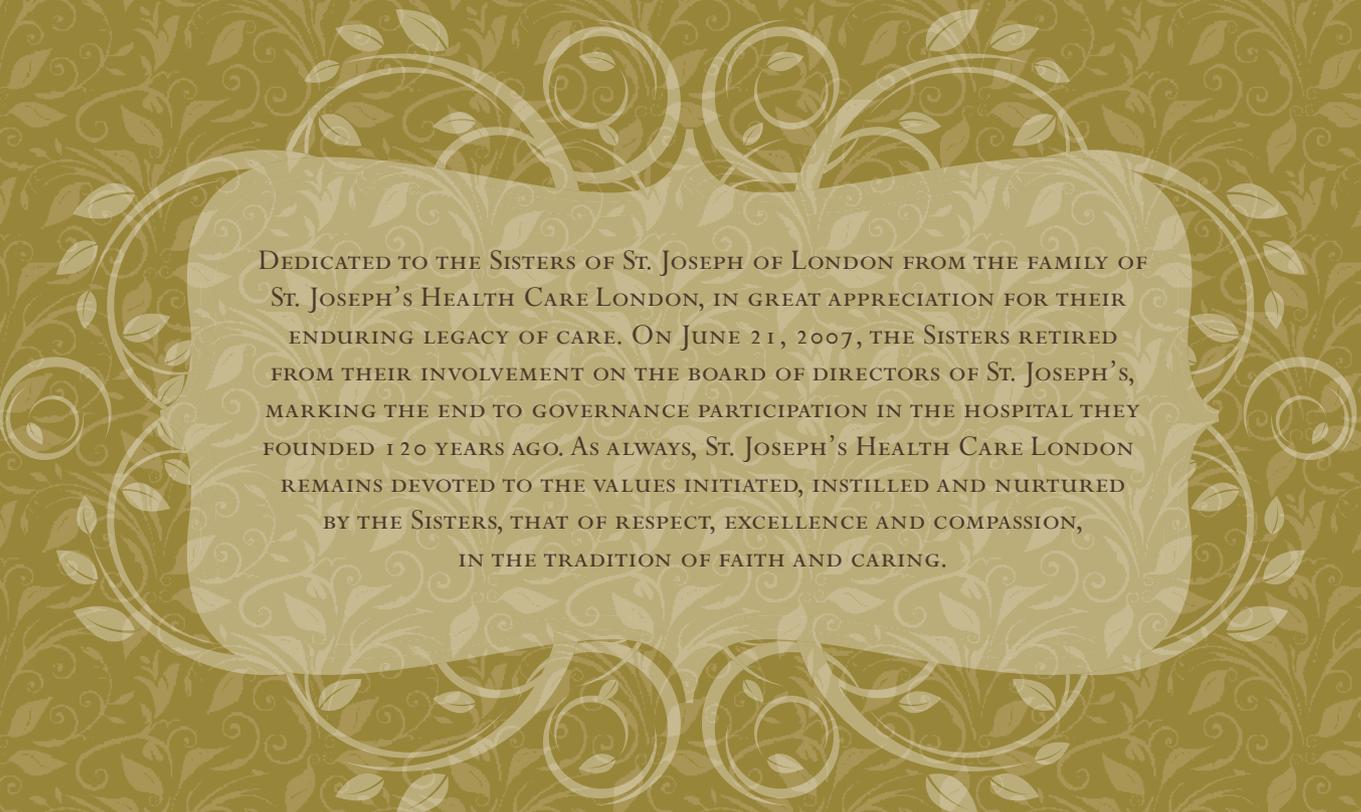




# SISTER

THE HISTORY OF THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF LONDON





DEDICATED TO THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF LONDON FROM THE FAMILY OF ST. JOSEPH'S HEALTH CARE LONDON, IN GREAT APPRECIATION FOR THEIR ENDURING LEGACY OF CARE. ON JUNE 21, 2007, THE SISTERS RETIRED FROM THEIR INVOLVEMENT ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF ST. JOSEPH'S, MARKING THE END TO GOVERNANCE PARTICIPATION IN THE HOSPITAL THEY FOUNDED 120 YEARS AGO. AS ALWAYS, ST. JOSEPH'S HEALTH CARE LONDON REMAINS DEVOTED TO THE VALUES INITIATED, INSTILLED AND NURTURED BY THE SISTERS, THAT OF RESPECT, EXCELLENCE AND COMPASSION, IN THE TRADITION OF FAITH AND CARING.

SPECIAL THANKS TO LORI PERRIE AND SISTER MARY ZIMMER OF THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF THE DIOCESE OF LONDON FOR THEIR KNOWLEDGE, EXPERTISE AND KEEN ATTENTION TO DETAIL.

COVER: THE CARING HANDS OF SISTER NORITA KEENAN, WHO WORKED AT ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL FROM 1978-1993.

SECOND PRINTING 2019



Now, as always, the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph is to respond to the needs of the people with gentleness, peace and joy.





*Top left: Sister Assumption (Annie) Murphy and Sister Herman (Catherine) Murphy. The two were also biological sisters. Bottom left: Sister Martha Toohey. Above: Student nurses, circa 1903.*

# HISTORY OF THE SISTERS

THEY CAME TOGETHER MORE THAN 350 YEARS AGO, A DEDICATED, COMPASSIONATE BAND OF SISTERS WHO GATHERED IN LEPUY, FRANCE AT THE CALLING OF A FRENCH JESUIT, JEAN-PIERRE MEDAILLE.

Their mission was to heal the wounded, care for the sick, minister to the poor, the elderly, the orphans and the imprisoned, and to instill spirituality in young girls.

And so they did, growing in numbers, reaching out across countries and continents, creating a foundation of caring and teaching so solid it has endured and continues today.

Fortunately for London and the region, the rich history of the Sisters of St. Joseph is entrenched here too, having shaped education, health care and social services for more than 150 years. These pious pioneers also set an impressive example for women as administrators, directors and innovators long before the rearing of the feminist movement.

And so we honor their beginnings, their wondrous contributions, and their ongoing devotion to the people of London, Southwestern Ontario, and well beyond.

The journey from their beginnings in Lepuy, France, to North America saw the Sisters of St. Joseph through the torturous times of the French Revolution. With the fall of Robespierre, one group of these Sisters who survived - five were guillotined, others were imprisoned - were reorganized in Lyons, France, in 1807 by Mother St. John Fontbonne.

From there, the Sisters of St. Joseph were sent to St. Louis, Missouri in 1836, and then to Philadelphia in 1847 to establish convents. From the United States, they came to Canada, the first sisters arriving in 1851 to establish a community in Toronto.

On December 11, 1868, five Sisters from Toronto stepped off the train in London accompanied by their Superior General, Mother Antoinette. They came at the invitation of Bishop Walsh, second Bishop of London, to establish a branch house of the Toronto headquarters. Bishop Walsh had plans for the educational needs of the children of his diocese and care of the orphans and the aged.

The Sisters of St. Joseph began their journey of healing in Southwestern Ontario.

# ADMINISTERING HOPE

LESS THAN A YEAR AFTER ARRIVING IN LONDON, THE SISTERS OPENED MOUNT HOPE, A HOME FOR ORPHANS AND THE AGED. ORIGINALLY THE MAJESTIC HOME OF WILLIAM BARKER, THE 3.5 ACRE PROPERTY WAS LOCATED AT THE CORNER OF RICHMOND AND GROSVENOR STREETS.

On October 2, 1869, the first residents of Mount Hope arrived—17 orphans. Among them were 15 London-area children who had been staying at an orphanage in Toronto awaiting the opening of the London home. By the end of the year, there were more than 50 children living in Mount Hope.

*One day a light wagon was driven into the back yard in which there were three poor, neglected little children. One of them was so scantily clad that the Sister who came to take them in, wrapped her apron around her to decently convey the child into the house. Two Sisters undertook to bathe and clean them. They were, all three, literally a mass of filth and sores and vermin. These parasites were embedded in their skin and it took hours to complete the task. Sister Helena (Lyons) proved herself the valiant woman, but her companion succumbed before the task was completed, nor did she appear at the table at meal time, for a reason we leave you to surmise. (1)*

Neglected elderly would find their way to Mount Hope through hospitals and churches. The orphans and elderly had separate quarters and each had its own staff of Sisters and laywomen. The dining room was shared and each group had its own long tables and benches.

*One man who entered Mount Hope in the early days had sold his farm and divided his money among his children. In a few years, when he became unable to work, he was disowned by his family. No one wanted to take care of him or give him a home. He came to Mount Hope, where he lived only two weeks, during which time he walked the yard repeating the words, “They have turned me out. They have turned me out,” while the tears rolled down his cheeks. He certainly died of a broken heart. (2)*

By 1876, Mount Hope had become so crowded an addition was built to accommodate the burgeoning number of residents. By 1880, about 200 people were living at the home. It would remain a refuge for the elderly for the next 89 years.

White mortars and pestels



# STEPPING STONES

THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE SISTERS QUICKLY ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF THE PEOPLE AND PASTORS OF THE DIOCESE AND GODERICH BECAME THE SITE OF THE FIRST MISSION THAT GREW OUT OF THE LONDON MOTHERHOUSE.

*One evening the Sisters were assembled to hear the expected announcement as to who were the appointed ones for the new mission. Each held her breath in deep anxiety while awaiting the names of the chosen few and the final command to go forth. Tears were shed in abundance and sorrow cast her shadow over the whole household for they were as one family.*

*Accompanied by Reverend Mother, they set out on November 4, 1873, and arrived in Goderich about three o' clock. It seemed a far-away place, and the tedious journey by Stratford, where they waited three hours for train connections, seemed long indeed to the anxious hearts of the young missionaries. (3)*

In Goderich, a beautiful brick convent had been built and fully furnished for the Sisters. Parents were so enthusiastic about sending their children to the convent school, the two-storey frame house on the grounds of the convent soon became inadequate. A school was opened and attended by the youth of Goderich.

Six years later, the demand for religious teachers brought the Sisters to St. Thomas and Ingersoll, where convents were established and the Sisters took charge of the classrooms and other activities.

*The first Mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London opened in Goderich in 1873.*



## ERRANDS OF MERCY

IT WAS A SUNNY CLEAR EVENING ON MAY 24, 1881, WHEN THE VICTORIA, AN EXCURSION STEAMBOAT, SET OUT FROM THE SPRINGBANK DOCK ON THE THAMES RIVER WITH A CRUSH OF 600 TO 800 PEOPLE ABOARD. IT WAS TO BE THE STEAMBOAT'S LAST TRIP, ONE THAT WOULD END IN DISASTER.

As the boat reached the Cove Bridge just below the bend, it careened and rolled over, crushing passengers. The exact number of dead was never confirmed but there were 182 internments in local cemeteries and several bodies were taken elsewhere for burial. One estimate at the time placed the number of dead at 215. They lay in rows on the bank of the river. Up and down the bank walked London priests Father Tiernan, Father Cummins and Father O' Mahoney, giving absolution to those who still had a spark of life.

*Early next morning, Mother Ignatia, knowing there were many sad homes and broken hearts all through the city, sent her Sisters, two and two, to visit any house, Catholic or Protestant, where their services would be of use. In some cases, a crazed mother or father rushed into the street to call the Sisters into the house.*

*As the Sisters went on their errands of mercy during these two days, many appalling sights met their gaze. In one house they found a mother whose two children were dead; in another, a mother whose three children, her sister and brother were drowned and she and the father left alone. (4)*



*Doctor's bag*



Photo: Victor Aziz

Sister Mary Margaret Childs directs the nurses' choir at the opening of a new wing at St. Joseph's Hospital in London on April 23, 1954.

## HUMBLE BEGINNINGS



The hospital had no instruments for the operating room at that time. Each doctor used his own...

IMPRESSED BY THE EFFICIENT MANNER IN WHICH THE SISTERS RAN MOUNT HOPE, THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR OF HOSPITALS AND CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS ENCOURAGED MOTHER IGNATIA TO TAKE ON HOSPITAL WORK.

For \$7,500, the Reverend Mother obtained an old home across from Mount Hope on Judge Street near the corner of Richmond and Grosvenor streets and the Sisters set about extensive alterations to make it suitable for hospital purposes.

*They first fitted up a little nook—it was no more than the closed space over the side porch which they prepared for a temporary chapel. The altar was made out of a packing box covered with white paper, on the front of which was IHS in gold paper. (5)*

On October 15, 1888, St. Joseph's Hospital was officially opened with 10 beds and space to accommodate 24 patients in total. The staff consisted of three Sisters and four doctors.

*One morning, early, in a most unexpected manner, their initial patient arrived and the dream of serving the sick in hospital work became a reality. Mrs. Well, one of London's earliest residents, was working around in her little shanty, slipped on an onion, fell and*

*Mortar and pestel, symbolic of a pharmacist, presented in 1962 to Sister Marie Miles (Sister Giovanni), the first and only Sister pharmacist.*



*Nurses' graduation procession, circa 1905*

*fractured her hip. There were no ambulances, no telephones, and no automobiles, so the neighboring milkman kindly lifted her into his cart and brought her to the new hospital. (6)*

From this humble beginning, St. Joseph's Hospital grew and in just four years, on October 15, 1892, a new building adjacent to the original house opened. There were 50 rooms in the addition, including a chapel and an operating room.

*The stretcher on which the patients were brought up and down was a strong, heavy linen sheet suspended on two poles. (The hydraulic elevator*

*shaft being more ornamental than useful). The first rubber-tire cart for the elevator was purchased later by the doctors of the staff, who each contributed his share.*

*The hospital had no instruments for the operating room at that time. Each doctor used his own and these had to be sterilized and left in order after each operation. The operating room nurse helped to care for the surgical cases and as they often hung between life and death for hours, and sometimes for days, we can realize the anxiety that weighed upon her upon whom so much depended. (7)*



Top left: Sister Christopher McMahon, with patient and nurse at St. Joseph's Hospital in London, circa mid 1950s.  
Top right: Student nurses' dining room, circa early 1940s. Above: Student nurses' recreation room, circa 1940s.

The hospital would grow again in 1903, expanding its capacity to 80 beds and a nursing staff of 30. In that year, the hospital admitted 850 patients, a jump from 532 patients treated the previous year.

When Bishop McEvay came to London, he wanted to see trained nurses with proper qualifications in the hospitals. He advised Reverend Mother to send two Sisters to train in a standardized hospital. In January 1900, Sister Justina Podleski and Sister Monica Coyle left the Motherhouse at Mount Hope to take the nurses' training course at St. Joseph's Hospital in Guelph. Upon their return, Sister Justina was appointed Superintendent of the new St. Joseph's training school. The first class numbered eight.

Eventually in 1927, a four-storey structure linked to the hospital would be built at Richmond and Louisa (now Cromwell) streets for the nursing school. About 200 students lived in the building, attending classes in the new wing's lecture rooms and gaining hands-on experience in the hospital. A tradition of excellence in nursing education would endure for 76 years, ending in 1977 when the school closed.

*Today we join the ranks of those valiant women who have gone forth from St. Joseph's School of Nursing to minister in that great work which Florence Nightingale has styled "God's Business." We would be fearful of our responsibility for the marring or perfecting of God's great plan in creating us, were it not for the advantage of true Christian education and training, which is the invaluable legacy of every graduate of St. Joseph's. (8)*

By 1948, St. Joseph's Hospital had expanded through five major additions and had grown to accommodate 300 patients. About 330 staff members were employed, including 27 Sisters. The hospital was now a major referral centre for Southwestern Ontario and had signed a formal agreement with the University of Western Ontario officially recognizing St. Joseph's as a teaching hospital.



Medical textbooks

# CARING IN CHATHAM

*THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF ST. JOSEPH BEG TO ANNOUNCE THAT THEY HAVE OPENED A HOSPITAL IN THE BUILDING FORMERLY OCCUPIED AS A SALVATION ARMY BARRACKS ON CENTRE STREET . . .*

*The hospital affords accommodation for 16 patients and even 20 if necessary. They will accept all patients irrespective of creed who may seek admittance and who really require care or treatment. In fact, the religion of patients will not be inquired into. (9)*

With those words, St. Joseph's Hospital in Chatham opened for business. The year was 1890 and the Sisters had once again responded to the urgent appeal for their services by the medical profession.

Construction of a new building for the hospital began in 1891 and was completed the following year. Patients were moved from the barracks to the new site on King Street by bobsleigh in which was packed straw covered with blankets.

*For the first three years there was no system for heating water on the floors. All water used by nurses and patients had to be heated in the kitchen. For operations the water was heated on the kitchen stove and carried to the operating room. The sterilizer was a common boiler. There was no elevator and the trays were prepared in the kitchen and carried*

*on stretchers by the Sisters and the domestics. The labor of laundry was indescribable. Often the Sister who was night nurse began the wash between three and four in the morning, occasionally returning to the floors to glance at the patients and to see that all was well. (10)*

In the summer of 1918 an epidemic of typhoid fever broke out and developed so rapidly that private rooms, halls, offices, sun parlours and other large rooms were used to accommodate the sick. Following this typhoid epidemic, influenza took its toll. The nurses who could work remained on duty day and night. Tents were set up on the roof garden so that the nurses could get some rest. The Catholic Women's League of Chatham supplied preserves, fruits, vegetables, bread and made extra linens. The whole community rallied around the Sisters.

In 1993, the Sisters left the administration of the hospital to the St. Joseph's Health Care Society, a group made up of interested lay persons under the auspices of the Bishop of London. As a result of restructuring of hospitals by the Ontario Government in the late 1990s, St. Joseph's Hospital in Chatham was sold to the City of Chatham for a retirement home and its services joined with the Public General Hospital on the Grand Avenue site.



Top: Nursery at St. Joseph's Hospital in Chatham, 1892.  
Bottom: St. Joseph's Hospital in Chatham, circa 1892.



Microscope

## A GRAND CHANGE

AS LONDON GREW, SO TOO DID THE NUMBERS OF YOUNG AND OLD REQUIRING THE CARE OF THE SISTERS AT MOUNT HOPE. BY THE 1890S THE HOME WAS FILLED TO CAPACITY AND NEW QUARTERS WERE SOUGHT FOR THE ORPHANS. THE NUMBER OF SISTERS ALSO GREW, INCREASING THE NEED FOR MORE SPACE.

When Hellmuth College on Richmond Street came up for sale, it was thought to be a magnificent site for an orphanage and for the Sisters' Motherhouse. Situated on top of a hill overlooking the Thames River and much of the city, the property was originally Crown Land granted to the English Church Corporation through Bishop Cronyn and, on his death, to Bishop Hellmuth.

This stately building with its lavish grounds was erected by Bishop Hellmuth as a college for young well-to-do women who came from across Canada and the U.S. On April 10, 1899, the college, including the chapel and the organ, was purchased for \$13,000 by the Sisters of St. Joseph, although it would be several months before they took possession.

The move to the new site began in May but was complicated by the lack of a bridge crossing the river at Richmond. Brough's Bridge had just been condemned and torn down that spring to make room for a steel structure. Horse-drawn wagon trips carrying convent goods to the new site were made via Adelaide Street.

*The children of school age only were removed to the Mount when it was first opened. The river was crossed on stepping stones and in the middle where the current was stronger were barrels of sand on which planks were placed. The Sisters had to use all their powers of persuasion to encourage the children to cross the river, and indeed some refused until nightfall was at hand. (11)*

Life at Mount St. Joseph was a grand change for the Sisters and the children. The spectacular views, recreational space, and natural areas were thoroughly enjoyed. Since the new site was some distance from the city and there was no streetcar service, those Sisters who taught at various schools in the city were picked up by a horse-drawn bus with room for 12 passengers.

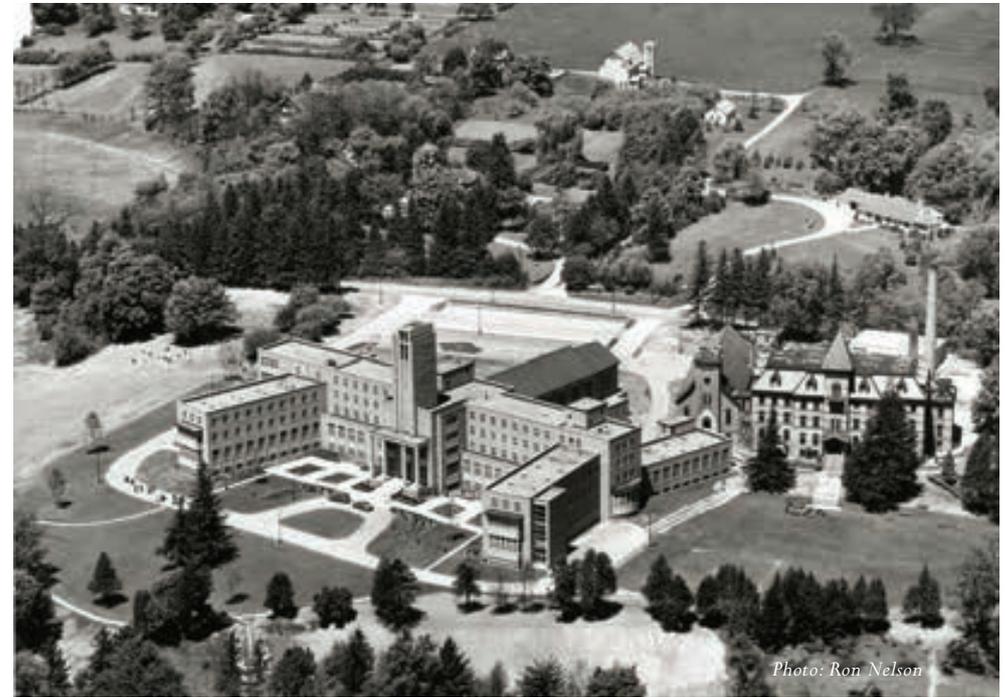
*One evening, the driver was anxious to reach home on time and attempted to pass a load of hay slowly making its way out Richmond Street. The snow was deep, and the bus toppled to one*

*Surgical instruments*



*side, leaving all the occupants in a heap on the snow. Some were slightly injured, but most of the Sisters escaped with a few bruises and a bad shock to the nervous system. Thanks be to God, the horses stood perfectly still or many lives would have been endangered. (12)*

The elderly, meanwhile, remained at Mount Hope, the name of which was changed to the House of Providence. By 1914, there were 214 elderly residents under the care of the Sisters. It would continue as House of Providence until 1966, when it was replaced by Marian Villa.



*Photo: Ron Nelson*



*Top: Mount St. Joseph's Motherhouse, 1954, with old orphanage visible on the grounds.  
Bottom: Ear, nose and throat operating room, St. Joseph's Hospital in London, circa early 1950s.*

## HEEDING THE CALL

REQUESTS FOR THE SERVICES OF THE SISTERS CONTINUED TO MULTIPLY AS THE POPULATION IN SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO INCREASED, PARTLY DUE TO IMMIGRATION. BETWEEN 1906 AND 1914, CONVENTS WERE OPENED IN SARNIA, KINGSBRIDGE, SEAFORTH, ST. MARYS AND WOODSTOCK.

In 1914, Sacred Heart Convent was established in downtown London to accommodate the Sisters teaching in the London schools, and to leave room at Mount St. Joseph orphanage and Motherhouse for the orphans and the Sisters looking after them. At that time, there were 185 Sisters in London looking after 231 orphans at Mount St. Joseph, 213 elderly at Mount Hope and teaching 1,611 pupils in city schools. The hospital, meanwhile, was a bustling place with 2,573 admissions annually.

Between 1914 and 1939, the Sisters established a presence in Kinkora, Paincourt, Windsor, Leamington, Maidstone, Delhi, Tillsonburg, Simcoe and Langton. St. Joseph's Manor, a home for homeless and poor children, was opened in Windsor in the early 1930s.

*The Sisters were anxious to procure a permanent dwelling in Leamington, but until this time (1932), nothing suitable was in view. One evening while they were out walking, they planted a St. Joseph's medal in a lovely flowerbed on the grounds of a house that looked more suitable for a convent. They were delighted and a little surprised in a week's time to hear that the occupants were being transferred to another town. The owner was reached and in a few weeks, the agreement was signed leasing the property for three years with the first option of purchasing. This house was ready for occupation in September 1932. (13)*

In 1922, the first convent was established in Western Canada, in Edmonton. By 1934, the Sisters had opened western hospitals in Stettler, Galahad, Killam and Rimbey, and convents in Wetaskiwin and St. Bride's.



*Underwood typewriter circa 1912*



Top left: Sisters at Mount St. Joseph's Motherhouse, circa 1954. Right: Sister Immaculata Brophy, teaches music to a young pupil at Sacred Heart Convent in London, 1940. Above: Nurses celebrate the opening of the east wing of St. Joseph's Hospital in London circa 1932.



ENT scope



*Nursery and a newborn at St. Joseph's Hospital in Sarnia, circa 1946.*



*Glass syringes*

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In October 1946, the new St. Joseph's Hospital in Sarnia was completed, offering 150 beds, 30 bassinets and all the facilities necessary for an active treatment hospital.

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# SUCCESS IN SARNIA

IT WAS THE EARLY 1940S WHEN THE SARNIA CITY COUNCIL REALIZED THAT HEALTH CARE SERVICES WERE NOT KEEPING PACE WITH THE TREMENDOUS GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY. THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH WERE APPROACHED FOR A NEW HOSPITAL.

Although the permit to build was granted, even the most ardent well wishers of the Sisters had misgivings. The difficulties of building were almost insurmountable due to a shortage of materials and a lack of skilled labor. But in April 1944, construction began. Work was slow, but the need for patient accommodations was so urgent, one floor was opened in March 1946 inside the unfinished building.

In October 1946, the new St Joseph's Hospital was ready, offering 150 beds, 30 bassinets and all the facilities necessary for an active treatment hospital. It was one of the first complete hospitals to emerge after the Second World War and many new features and devices were incorporated into the building. The \$1-million dollar project was financed entirely by the Sisters as there was no financial assistance from the government at that time.

Rapid growth in the area led to a massive, seven-storey addition in 1959, followed by an added pediatric wing the following year and further renovations in 1966. In that year, the hospital served more than 27,000 patients and 857 babies were born. There were 649 hospital employees and 129 medical staff.

The hospital would continue to grow and change, keeping pace with technology, population and current visions of health care.

However, as a result of restructuring by the Ontario Government in the late 1990s, St. Joseph's Hospital and Sarnia General Hospital came together as Bluewater Health in order to plan for a new building. Subsequently, the St. Joseph's Health Care Society came to a decision to withdraw from the Bluewater Health group and to continue in another capacity to serve the people of Sarnia. The St. Joseph's Hospice Resource Centre was established to provide outpatient and family support. Future plans included a residential hospice in Sarnia, which would come to be in late 2009.

## LASTING LEGACIES

BY THE LATE 1940'S, THE SISTERS AND PHYSICIANS WHO WORKED WITH THEM RECOGNIZED THAT MANY OF THE ELDERLY RESIDENTS IN THE HOUSE OF PROVIDENCE IN LONDON REQUIRED CHRONIC OR LONG TERM CARE.

They also realized that active treatment hospitals were looking after a large number of chronically ill patients. And so St. Mary's Hospital was born. It officially opened on May 1, 1951 on the corner of Grosvenor and Richmond Streets with 207 beds. The first occupants were 35 patients transferred from the adjoining House of Providence.

St. Mary's was praised for having the latest technology and the most modern equipment available, particularly for physiotherapy. The patients ranged in age from 31 to 92.

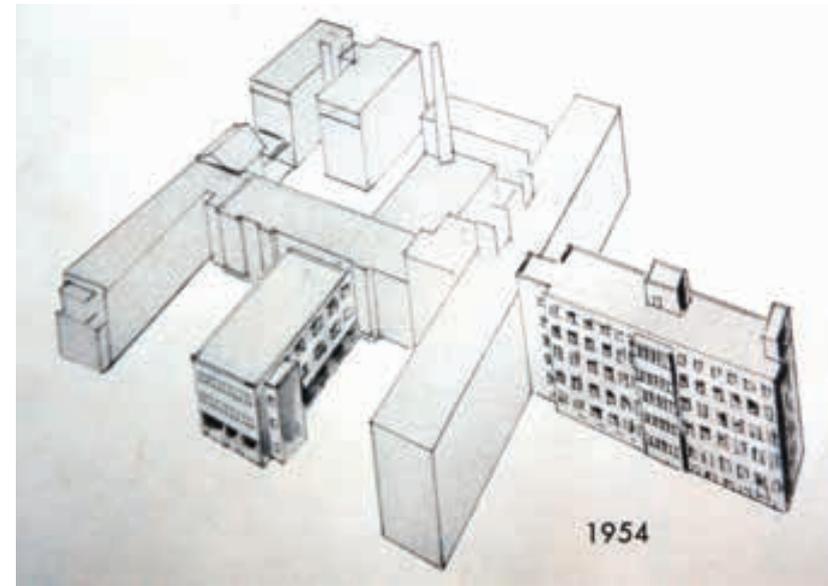
*Speaking for the city of London, Mayor Allan J. Rush said it was an auspicious day for London. "The chronically ill call for special sympathies," he declared. "This building proves the Sisters have felt the need and have done something about it. I congratulate the Sisters on behalf of London for their vision and Christian charity in undertaking this work." (14)*

By this time, the population of London had grown substantially, led by the industrial development after the Second World War. St. Joseph's Hospital had become not only a busy community hospital, but a renowned regional hospital accepting referrals from physicians in smaller hospital centres.

The year 1954 would see the hospital undertake its largest expansion yet – the building of two new wings at the same time. One was an administrative wing with teaching and clinic facilities and additional patient rooms. The other, called Marian Wing, would house a new psychiatric department, expanded maternity and nursing facilities, a floor dedicated to surgical patients, and living quarters for 22 Sisters. The two new additions increased bed capacity to 500 patients.

In 1955, attic space was converted creating a fourth floor on the main portion of the building. A year later, another wing extending east along Cromwell Street was added. It was in 1956 that the first dialysis took place at St. Joseph's Hospital in London.

Despite these expansions, by 1958 the hospital was operating over capacity and another expansion was needed. Construction on the Wellington Wing, which currently contains the Urgent Care Centre, began in 1962.



*Top left: Sister Leonarda Kelly, at microscope in the blood bank at St. Joseph's Hospital in London, circa mid 1940s. Bottom left: Main operating room, pre-1930. Top right: Emergency department, circa mid 1950s. Bottom right: St. Joseph's underwent its largest expansion, the building of two wings, in 1954.*

*My office was down the hall from the chapel and on Friday evenings, if I was working late, I would hear the voices in hymn, ghostly and magnificent, wafting down the hall. I loved the romance of it, the beauty of it. (15)*

In 1967, St. Joseph's Hospital pioneered a perinatal unit, a high risk obstetrical and neonatal unit. There would be many more milestones. The hospital, perhaps one of the greatest legacies of the Sisters' history of caring, would become a medical force in the country. The Lawson Research Institute, established in 1983, quickly leapt to the forefront internationally for its groundbreaking work in medical science. It would later become Lawson Health Research Institute, driving discovery across all London's hospitals.

In 1984, the health centre became the first Canadian hospital to clinically use magnetic resonance imaging. In 1990, it became the second Ontario facility to operate a renal lithotripsy unit. In 1992, the Hand and Upper Limb Centre would open and quickly become internationally renowned for its expertise. Numerous other groundbreaking achievements would follow.

In 1993, however, there would be a shift in the governance of St. Joseph's Hospitals in London, Chatham and Sarnia. With the Sisters deciding to leave direct management of hospitals, the St. Joseph's Health Care Society was formed to ensure the

continued success of Catholic hospital care in keeping with the Sisters' legacy. To date, Sister Jacqueline Janisse remains a member of the St. Joseph's Health Care Society.

In London, with the Society at the helm, St. Joseph's Hospital continues to honour its faith-based heritage and retain its close affiliation with the Sisters. The transition actually began in 1988 when Sister Mary Doyle stepped down as administrator. For the first time in the history of St. Joseph's, the job went to a lay person, Phil Hassen, who took on the title of CEO. The Sisters remained involved, however, through active participation on the board of directors. They would continue in this role until June 21, 2007. With the retirement of Sister Joan Atkinson, the Sisters decided to step down from governance participation but the St. Joseph's board, Society and health care staff will always be guided by their example. The close relationship with the Sisters remain through various means, such as the Sisters of St. Joseph Awards of Excellence, which honour staff members who demonstrate the same remarkable attributes of the hospital's founders.

*Working with the Sisters, anything was possible. They were so very accepting of what was needed in health care and what the physicians wanted to accomplish. (16)*



*Glass cups for "cupping patients"*



Top: Official opening of the detox centre on William Street, London, Sept. 10, 1973 with Sister St. Patrick Joyce, left, Sister Mary Doyle, and Judge Coulter. Above left: Sister Mary Doyle, administrator, 1963-1983, and Chief Executive Officer, 1983-1988. Above right: Sister Norita Keenan, who greeted visitors and patients at the reception and information desk, as well as performed many other tasks, from 1978-1993. Sister Norita's hands appear on the book's cover.

# INSPIRING THE YOUNG

THROUGHOUT, THE SISTERS DEVOTION TO EDUCATION KEPT PACE WITH THEIR WONDROUS ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN HEALTH CARE.

In 1950, they opened an academy for young ladies. Initially housed at the crowded Sacred Heart Convent, it moved three years later to the site of the new St. Joseph's Motherhouse, which was under construction. There were 26 students. With the feminist movement still in its infancy, Bishop Cody stressed the importance of education for women.

*It is no longer sufficient, he said, to only train men as leaders; modern life is such that it requires the interplay between the sexes, with their divergent talents and temperaments, to assure a balanced society. (17)*

By 1957, the student body had grown at the academy to number 80 residents and 25 day students. In 1959, the students moved into their new quarters, which completed the original plans for the Mount St. Joseph Motherhouse site. The academy could now accommodate 50 residents in spacious dormitories. Its classroom facilities could handle 400 students (residents and day pupils). There was a large gym, a modern home-economics room, library and art room. It would provide an education for young women for the next 26 years.

In 1985 when the academy closed, the boarders' residence was used as a guest wing. For a minimal fee, it provided accommodation for families of patients from University Hospital who came from near and far for organ transplants and other treatments. This guest wing closed in 2005 when Mount St. Joseph was sold.



*Above: Student nurses' classroom, now the Lawson Board Room at St. Joseph's Hospital in London. Above right: Nurses' training school and residence, circa 1927.  
Bottom right: Graduation, nursing class of 1974.*



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...the Sisters lived initially in a tarpaper shack with a leaking roof and no insulation or indoor plumbing.

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Top: From left, Sisters Mary Winifred Dunn, Appolinia Foley, Eugene Bond, and Wendelin Roth forged new ground by heading to Haney B.C. to staff a six-classroom school in 1952. Bottom: A postcard from the Yellowknife Mission, established in 1953.



## VENTURING WEST

IN ANSWER TO EARNEST PLEAS, THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH FORGED NEW GROUND IN THE WEST, SPREADING OUT TO HANEY B.C. REVEREND FATHER J.S. STEELE NEEDED SISTERS TO STAFF THE SIX-CLASSROOM STRUCTURE HE HAD BUILT IN THE SUMMER OF 1952. REVEREND MOTHER MARGARET COUGHLIN APPOINTED SISTERS EUGENE BOND, APPOLONIA FOLEY, WENDELIN ROTH, AND MARY WINIFRED DUNN FOR THIS MISSION.

*Sister Eugene writes that they arrived [in Haney, British Columbia] in August and apparently brought great joy to the Pastor's heart. He later admitted publicly that the happiest day of his life was the day he saw the Sisters step off the train. (18)*

Other B.C. missions would follow: Rutland (now Kelowna) in 1970, Prince George in 1972, Oliver in 1975, Trail in 1978 and Nelson in 1985.

In 1953, the first missionaries to Yellowknife and the Northwest Territories were sent from London, arriving August 11, 1953. The new school was modern and well supplied. The convent, however, was not yet ready and the Sisters lived initially in a tarpaper shack with a leaking roof and no insulation or indoor plumbing.

They had come to Yellowknife to provide a Christian influence and presence in the community and to educate the young. In 1978, a new Catholic elementary school was built in a new housing development. It was named after St. Joseph in honour of the Sisters for their service in the schools and Parish.

*Hospitality has always been a mark of the Sisters' convent in Yellowknife. From the earliest days when there were no teacherages or other accommodations, the lay teachers shared the Sisters' home and meals. (19)*

Some Sisters have remained in Yellowknife, Hay River and Fort Rae in the Northwest Territories where they minister to the Indigenous people and serve the Church in the north.

# GROWING PAINS

AFTER ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL WAS BUILT TO PROVIDE APPROPRIATE CARE FOR THE CHRONICALLY ILL, THE SISTERS SET ABOUT RENOVATING THE HOUSE OF PROVIDENCE. EVERY FLOOR WAS REDONE. CRAMPED DORMITORIES AND DARK ROOMS TOOK ON A BRIGHT NEW LOOK, HALLWAYS BECAME SITTING ROOMS, AND THE CHAPEL WAS REDECORATED AND ENLARGED TO ACCOMMODATE WHEELCHAIRS. IN 1956, THERE WERE 130 RESIDENTS, THE AVERAGE AGE BEING 76.

By the 1960s, however, the need for more beds was acute. The Advisory Board of the House of Providence had been working on a building project as the original building, despite the renovations, was becoming an increasing fire hazard. The plan was to demolish the old building and replace it with a new residential facility.

The new building, named Marian Villa, officially opened in 1966 with 214 beds. The House of Providence, meanwhile, continued to provide another 58 beds until 1969, when it was

completely vacated. It was demolished in 1980 and replaced by a connection joining Marian Villa to St. Mary's Hospital. In 1985, the boards of St. Joseph's Hospital, Marian Villa and St. Mary's Hospital merged to form St. Joseph's Health Centre, placing the continuum of care under one management. The amalgamation would lead to a new vision for long term care and plans for a new facility to replace St. Mary's. Construction got underway in 1995 and was completed in 1997.

Renamed Mount Hope Centre for Long Term Care, the building encompasses Marian Villa and St. Mary's. The state-of-the-art facility was designed to enhance independence, personal choice and wellness and today is a vital resource to the community and region.

The opening of the new Mount Hope, however, would be a mere blip in a frenzy of upcoming change for St. Joseph's and for health care across the city. The next 17 years would see unprecedented restructuring of services—the amalgamation of institutions, integration of programs and people, realignment of services, and the development of new facilities and technologies to accommodate the shift to outpatient care, care closer to home and the financial reality of shrinking resources.

It would be a dramatic turn for health care in the city that would set an example across the province for the delivery of service. St. Joseph's was on the verge of the most expansive changes since first opening its doors. It would be a major challenge that would significantly reshape services but leave the always-enduring vision and mission of the Sisters intact.

Parkwood Hospital and the London and St. Thomas psychiatric hospitals would join the St. Joseph's family in 2001. Twelve years later, in June 2013, St. Joseph's opened Southwest Centre for Forensic Mental Health Care in Elgin County to replace Regional Mental Health Care St. Thomas, and in November 2014, Parkwood Hospital and Regional Mental Health Care London came together in one location under one new name, Parkwood Institute, with the opening of the new Mental Health Care Building. Working to erase the lines between physical and mental illness, Parkwood Institute is unlike any hospital site in Ontario.

St. Joseph's has embarked on a new and exciting path and at no other time has the care it provides been more critical to the health and well-being of its patients, families and communities. And at the core, as always, is compassion, excellence and respect—the values initiated and nurtured by the Sisters, in the tradition of faith and caring.



*Dunning colorimeter, for renal functional test  
(kidney function kits – lab equipment)*



The vision of 350 years ago —  
to heal, to care, to instill  
spirituality — is intact, is  
current, is very much alive.



## ALWAYS ONWARD

AND SO WE HAVE REACHED TODAY, THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH HAVING CARVED OUT A DIVERSE AND POWERFUL TRADITION OF CARING. AND STILL, AFTER 150 YEARS IN THE LONDON REGION, THE TENDRILS OF THAT TRADITION CONTINUE TO GROW AND CHANGE WITH THE TIMES. ALWAYS TIMELY, ALWAYS VISIONARY, ALWAYS NECESSARY, THIS BAND OF WOMEN CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE WELL-BEING OF THE DISADVANTAGED, OF THOSE FACING CHALLENGES OR IN SEARCH OF SPIRITUAL HEALTH, AND THOSE IN FAR-FLUNG CORNERS OF THE EARTH FACING CRISES OF WAR, POVERTY, STARVATION AND OTHER LIFE DISASTERS.

Peru, Nicuargua, Igloolik in Nunavut - the Sisters in London have, over the years, answered the call, whether it's opening a clinic for the sick and poor or educating the young.

In 1994, an organization called Heart-Links was established to support the work initially started by the Sisters in the Zana Valley, Peru, where they provided many years of missionary service. Heart-Links is a sharing of friendship, skills and resources with members visiting each summer and participating in a work awareness program. The organization became an

*Small mortar and pestel, graduation gift to Sister Marie Miles, June 1962.*

incorporated charity in January 2003 and continues to this day to help the poor in Peru.

In London, the Medaille House of Prayer was established by the Sisters in 1969 as a retreat for individuals and groups seeking solitude, prayer and spiritual direction. This welcoming place nurtured those in need of spiritual reawakening until 2012. The Sisters, however, continue to offer spiritual direction and psychotherapy services at the former Mount St. Joseph.

There is also the bustling St. Joseph's Hospitality Centre, a soup kitchen in East London where nutritious meals are served to the disadvantaged.

*The guests are known. They are called by name. The atmosphere is inviting and cheerful and amidst the loud clatter of dishes, light laughter wafts through the café. A temporary calmness obscures the pain and the angst of the burdened while volunteers who care enough to walk the journey with those who live on the edges and in the cracks of society discover the gifts of the poor. (20)*

The Sisters' tireless efforts in the Forest City have, through the years, also included a home for refugees when they first arrive in Canada; a women's transition house where mentally ill and homeless women are offered refuge; a home on Boullée Street, which housed an outreach program for that neighborhood; a detoxification centre and St. Stephen's House, where those suffering from alcohol or drug addiction could receive help.

At the heart of all the Sisters' work is justice. Whether it's feeding the hungry or caring for the sick, they strive to advocate for social change. In 2000, the Sisters opened the Office for Children and Systemic Justice, later changing the name to simply Office for Systemic Justice to reflect a broader view. Through this organization the Sisters, partnering with others, address economic and social issues facing low income families through research, activism and education. This office is now part of the Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada.

The hands-on work continues. The caring hands reach on and on. In 1988, an associate program of the Sisters of St. Joseph

began with the gathering of lay women in various areas of Southwestern Ontario. These women work together to achieve unity of neighbour with neighbour and neighbour with God, through loving, healing and reconciling service. The lay associates now number in the nineties.

Remarkably, the Sisters continue to be innovators and leaders. In May 2005, their dwindling numbers led to the sale of the sprawling St. Joseph's Motherhouse and construction of a new residence. A testament to their vision and always-relevant endeavours, the residence is a model of environmentally friendly buildings. The design features more than 30 innovative green initiatives, from carefully chosen building materials, to the gold standard in energy and water efficiency. It's an outstanding building that sets the bar high in eco-stewardship, making the Sisters leaders in caring for the planet as well as people.

From this new headquarters, the Sisters will continue their work in London and beyond. The vision of 350 years ago—to heal, to care, to instill spirituality—is intact, is current, is very much alive. Now, as always, the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph is to respond to the needs of the people with gentleness, peace and joy.

And so they do.



*Top: The Sisters today. Front row from left, Sisters Eileen Foran, Jane Marie Stock, Norita Keenan, and Rose Ellen Donnelly. Back row from left, Sisters Monica Beaudoin, General Superior Margo Ritchie, St. Edward Grace, Kitty Stafford, and Mabel St. Louis. All spent many years at St. Joseph's Hospital, supporting patients and programs. They now live in the environmentally-friendly Sisters of St. Joseph residence in London. Bottom: Opened in June 2007, the new Sisters of St. Joseph residence meets the gold standard in energy and water efficiency, making it a model of eco-stewardship.*

Footnotes

(1)–(7) **Chronicles of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Diocese of London, 1868–1932**, by Sister Genevieve Hennessy CSJ, Unpublished, Sisters of St. Joseph of London Archives.

(8) **Graduation Valedictory—May, 1949**, by nurse Avice Warriner, Unpublished, Sisters of St. Joseph of London Archives.

(9)–(12) **Chronicles of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of London 1868–1932**, Sister Genevieve Hennessey, C.S.J. Unpublished, Sisters of St. Joseph of London Archives.

(13) **History of St. Joseph's Convent, Leamington, Ont.**, Unpublished, Sisters of St. Joseph of London Archives.

(14) **History of St. Mary's Hospital and Mount Hope Centre—London**, Unpublished, Sisters of St. Joseph of London Archives.

(15) Interview with Dr. Tom Wood, Respiriologist, St. Joseph's Health Centre, staff member from 1968–2002.

(16) Interview with Dr. David Meltzer, Oncologist, St. Joseph's Health Centre, staff member from 1954–1989.

(17) **History of the Academy**, Unpublished, Sisters of St. Joseph of London Archives.

(18) **50 Golden Years in Canada's Golden West**, A compilation by Rev. Sister Catherine Cunningham, CSJ, Edmonton, Alberta, Unpublished, Sisters of St. Joseph of London Archives.

(19) **History of the Sisters of St. Joseph of London, Yellowknife Mission, 1953–1984**, Unpublished, Sisters of St. Joseph of London Archives.

(20) **Finding God on the Edges**, *The Catholic Trustee*, 30:4, December 1991  
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