

**On November 6, 1936, 120 Sisters of St. Joseph of Peterborough and one Sister of St. Joseph of Pembroke who were ministering in the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie became founding members of the new congregation: The Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie**

**They had earlier responded to the invitation of Bishop R.H. Dignan newly appointed as the second Bishop of the diocese in 1935 to separate from Peterborough and form the new congregation. As a result, they assumed the teaching and health care ministries and convents in which they were already involved.**

**It was a wrenching experience, but one they embarked upon in faith, hope and love to continue to bring the charism of healing and reconciliation to the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie.**

## **Brief Summary of ministries assumed:**

### **Port Arthur-Fort William**

**St. Joseph's Convent, Port Arthur (1881 -1967)** included outreach to Moose Hill, Kakabeka Falls and Marathon

**St. Joseph's Hospital (1884 -**

**St. Joseph's Home/Orphanage/Boarding School (1870/85 – 1970)** first at Fort

William Indian Reserve on Kaministiquia River and then moved to nearby town of Fort William when mission forced to move because land was confiscated by Grand Trunk Pacific Railway in 1905

**St. Stanislaus School/Convent, Fort William (1902 – 1999)**

**St. Joseph's Training School of Nursing (1904 – 1973)**

**St. Joseph's Convent, Fort William (1906 – 1965)**

**St. Agnes Convent (1924 – 1994)**

**St. Patrick's High School (1928/1948 – 1972)**

**Sault Ste Marie**

**Sacred Heart Convent (1902 – 2009)** later included outreach ministry to

Batchewana, Goulais River, Searchmont, Hayden, Echo Bay, St. Joseph's Island, Desbarats, Mississauga Reserve

**North Bay**

**St. Mary's Convent (1906 – 1920)** included ministry outreach to Callendar, Garden Village

**St. Joseph's Academy/Convent (1920- 1982)**

**St. Joseph's Hospital/Convent (1931-)**

**St. Joseph School of Nursing (1931- 1972)**

**Sudbury**

**St. Joseph's Convent (1924 – 1957)** later included outreach to Creighton Mine, Coniston, Naughton, Wahnapiatae Val Caron, Hanmer, Whitefish Falls

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**Port Arthur 1881**

**St. Joseph's Convent, Port Arthur (1881 -1967)** The convent was built for five Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto who arrived to Prince Arthur's Landing at the request Bishop Jamot, Apostolic Delegate of Northern Ontario to open a school in the Jesuit St. Andrew's parish. Due to rail construction and forestry work camp accidents and illness among the citizens,



(L) St. Joseph's Hospital, (R) St. Joseph's Convent circa 1885

part of the convent was turned over to patients until the hospital was built.



(L) Convent attached to (R) hospital

At first a free-standing building, **St. Joseph's Convent**, Port Arthur was later enlarged and attached to the nearby expanding St. Joseph's Hospital. In 1936 the convent was assumed by the new congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie.

**St. Joseph's Hospital** actually began in the convent in 1882 when injured and sick were brought to the Sisters for care. At one point there were 13 patients in the convent, which was referred to in the local newspaper "The Sentinel" as "St. Joseph's Hospital". In 1883, the present site of the hospital was procured through the efforts of MP James Connee from the Ontario Government and a two story building constructed. However, at first the building was needed for a growing number of students, so the patients remained in a wing of the convent until seventeen were transferred on May 17, 1885. Prior to this, over 200 patients of all denominations and nationalities had been cared for by the Sisters in their convent home.



Founded in 1884 by Mother Monica (Flynn), until 1900 St. Joseph's Hospital was the only hospital in the region. In 1922 Dr. McEachern,

Director of the Hospital Standardization of Canada, placed St. Joseph's General Hospital in the list of A-01 Standard Hospitals. Mother Monica remained at the helm until her retirement, followed by her death in 1931. Every day she visited every patient in the hospital. Over the years in spite of severe financial difficulties there were several expansions (1904, 1915, 1928). The Sisters went begging in the railway and forestry work-camps offering a "hospital insurance coupon" to anyone who made a donation. Annual picnic bazaars, sales, concerts garden parties, tag days and collecting in all sorts of conveyances were essential in guaranteeing the survival of the young hospital. In 1934, the 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of St. Joseph's Hospital was widely celebrated in the city.

Sister Dymphna (McCarthy) was the second administrator, and she modernized the kitchen and the laundry; enlarged the chapel, the convent community room and built a new side porch.



St. Joseph's Hospital was assumed by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie in 1936 and further expanded the building and services.

Following provincial health care in 1995 it expanded to **St. Joseph's Care Group** in 1995 which, in 2017 – 2018 included

- Annual operating budget of just over \$181 million
- Two long-term care homes totaling 656 beds
- Two supportive housing buildings with 253 apartments
- 224 complex/rehabilitative care and hospice inpatient beds
- 38 inpatient mental health rehabilitation beds
- 22 crisis and stabilization beds for withdrawal management

And more recently: Amethyst House for out of town relatives of cancer patients; and Dawson Lodge for transitional housing and habilitation care for vulnerable adults.



**St. Joseph's Training School for Nurses** was founded in 1904 and in 1925 occupied a building purchased from MP James Conmee. A very competent teaching staff including doctors produced nurses over a three-year program who went on to hold

very responsible positions in Canada, the United States and overseas. It was classified as one of the best Nursing Schools in the province. It was assumed by CSJ-SSM in 1936.

### **Fort William 1885**



**St. Joseph's Home-Orphan Asylum** at the Fort William Jesuit Mission on the Reserve on the Kaministiquia River, founded in 1870 by Jesuits and the Daughters of the Immaculate Heart (Miss Nardines) was assumed by the Toronto Sisters of St. Joseph

who volunteered to remain in 1890 when the Peterborough Congregation was founded. Indigenous and non-indigenous children were cared for and taught in two schools, one for boys, the other for girls. The expenses for Indigenous children were partly covered by the Federal Department of the Interior and later the Department of Indian Affairs. The expenses for the

non-indigenous children were partly covered by the Ontario Department of Public Welfare and also, later Family and Children's Services.

When the new Peterborough CSJ Congregation was formed in 1890, all the Sisters at "St. Joseph's Home" voted to remain with the children at the Fort William Mission and became part of the new congregation. From the beginning and over the years, government funding was always inadequate. The Sisters went begging in the rail road construction and forestry work camps and relied on the Ladies Orphanage Aid Group, the Knights of Columbus, Catholic Women's League, Community Chest, the Elks Club and the Rotary Club, the City of Fort William, business and individual benefactors to make up the funding gap. When, in 1903 – 04, typhoid fever raged throughout the region and throughout the Mission, one child and two Sisters perished. Several fires destroyed the orphanage and other buildings, the worst one being in 1895 when the convent-orphanage and church were completely destroyed. Thankfully there was no loss of life.

**St. Joseph's Boarding School:**

In 1905 the Indian Mission Reserve land was expropriated to make way for the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. The Mission broke up into two groups; one moved west to Squaw (Mission) Bay and other settled east near Mount McKay. Both groups wanted the Sisters to rebuild the orphanage at their



Fire Drill Day at St. Joseph's Boarding School

site. In order not to show favoritism, Bishop Scollard recommended the orphanage-school be rebuilt in the nearby town of Fort William at the corner of Arthur and Franklin Street, which the Sisters undertook at their expense. Indigenous and non-indigenous children continued to be cared

for by the Sisters when the Boarding School opened in January 1909 under the direction of Mother Frances Clare and her four Sister assistants. The orphanage-school property also housed a small playground, a kitchen garden and a chicken coop. The privately owned orphanage was incorporated under the Charitable Institutions Act by the Ontario Department of Public Welfare.

Parents from nearby Indigenous Bands in the region including Nipigon, Red Rock, Batchewana, Nakina, Armstrong and others, also wanted to send their children to St. Joseph's Boarding School. Bishop Scollard was able to persuade the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) to pay partial grants for these children also, provided the Fort William Band approved. Nevertheless, government funding remained inadequate. Eventually the DIA agreed to pay minimal per capita expenses but wanted the Sisters to limit the quota of admissions. The Sisters were always in financial straits. The music teaching Sisters helped with revenue. Fund-raising and dependence on benefactors increased and remained essential during the lifetime of St. Joseph's Boarding School. Fortunately, the people of Thunder Bay were generous!

Beside children who were sent by their parents for schooling, children were also referred by the Children's Aid Society, Crippled Children's Society, relatives of orphans, and parents of broken families. The Sisters said they would never refuse a needy child.

During the Depression in 1931 – 1932, the Sisters were caring for 108 Indigenous children. The DIA agreed to pay expenses for only 75 in 1931 and 85 in 1932. Moreover, they reduced the per capita grant by 15%. The Sisters stated they would keep the 25 extra children free of charge rather than turn them away.

According to TJ Ryan, a former student, sent as a five-year-old orphan in 1911, Sr. Ambrose (Welsh) who taught both at the Fort William Mission and the new St. Joseph's Boarding School "spoke the Indian language".

The Sault Ste. Marie Congregation assumed St. Joseph's Boarding School in 1936. As day schools were expanding throughout the region, the need for boarding schools diminished and St. Joseph's Boarding School closed in June 1970.

**St Joseph's Convent** on Myles Street, Fort William opened in 1906. From 1902, the Sisters had been living across the street on the second floor of St. Stanislaus School. The Sisters living here opened and taught at taught in the St. Stanislaus School, St. Peter's School and St. Martin's elementary Schools. They also taught at St. Patrick's High School and well as teaching music.



St. Joseph's Convent, Fort William

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Peterborough teaching at St. Patrick's High school remained in Fort William and lived at this convent until 1946 when it was assumed by the Sault Congregation.

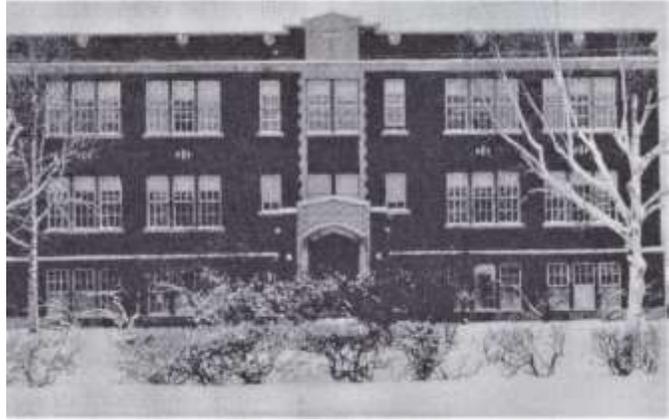


1St. Agnes Convent, West Fort William

**St. Agnes Convent** was established in 1924 in West Fort William. Here the Sisters taught music and went out to teach in the Fort William Catholic elementary schools including nearby St. Martin's School and St. Patrick's High School. The convent was assumed by The Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie in 1945 and the remaining Peterborough Sisters went to live at St. Joseph's Convent on

Myles Street. St. Agnes' Convent was destroyed by fire in 1994.

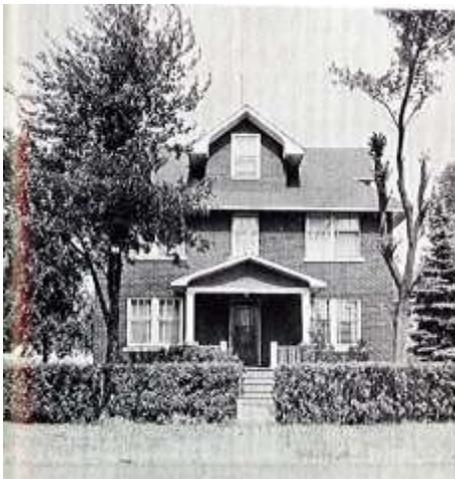
**St. Patrick's High School, Fort William** was founded in 1928 by St. Patrick's Jesuit Parish. Both elementary and secondary grades were taught there in the first years until more elementary schools were built. The teaching Sisters lived at either St. Agnes Convent or St. Joseph's



**2St. Patrick's High School**

Boarding School. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Peterborough taught there until 1948, at which time the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie assumed the teaching and principalship roles until 1972.

### **Sault Ste. Marie Foundation 1902**



**Sacred Heart Convent**

**Sacred Heart Convent** was founded in 1902 at 1 Herrick Street for Sister elementary school teachers who would teach in the first of five Catholic elementary schools for the next 35 years beginning with Sacred Heart School. Next, St. Mary's was built for the Italian population at Holy Rosary Parish, then Holy Angels in Blessed Sacrament Parish, then St. Stanislaus and St. Joseph's Schools. The convent was assumed in 1936 by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie. Outreach grew to include ministry to Batchewana, Goulais River, Searchmont, Hayden, Echo Bay, St. Joseph's Island, Desbarats and Mississauga Reserve.

## North Bay Foundation 1906

**St. Joseph's Academy** on McIntyre Street, across from the Cathedral, originally the Grand Union Hotel was purchased in 1920 by the Peterborough Sisters for a boarding and a day school for girls beginning with grade nine and a commercial class. The Sisters had been living



temporarily at first in home purchased by Bishop Scollard: “St. Mary’s Convent” following their arrival in the city in 1906 to teach at St. Mary’s School and later St. Joseph’s, St. Rita’s and St. Teresa’s Schools. In 1909 they moved to a beautiful convent built for them on Klock (later Algonquin) Avenue next to the Cathedral.

The transition after the purchase, to St. Joseph’s Academy was not easy! The Sisters had to clean the hotel before it was ready for occupancy. A high school grade was added each year and soon the Sisters had to enlarge the Academy later adding a new wing with chapel, recreation room, dining room, classrooms, dormitories and a large music department. It was the only English Catholic boarding school in Northern Ontario at the time and boarders flocked to it in large numbers.

When The Sisters of St. Joseph assumed St. Joseph’s Academy in 1936, it became their temporary Motherhouse until they and students moved to the newly built St. Joseph’s Motherhouse and College in January 1939

**St. Joseph's Hospital**, a four story, 90 bed fire resistant building on McLaren Street was opened in 1931 by Mother St. Philip (McGrath) and included **St. Joseph's School of Nursing** under the direction of Sister Felicitas (Whittaker) a remarkable



woman who also gave a paper on *The Improvement of Ward Teaching and Supervision* at the Catholic Association of Hospitals in Ottawa in April 1932. The Victoria Memorial Hospital had been in operation for over 25 years and for the last 15 years had proved inadequate, according to a letter from Bishop Scollard.

Some of the Peterborough Sisters stayed at the hospital to found the new Congregation of Sault Ste. Marie including Mother St. Philip who was appointed the first General Superior for 1936 – 1937 when the first General Chapter took place. She remained at the hospital she built until her death.

St. Joseph's Hospital later initiated St. Joseph's Treatment Centre for addictions in 1974 and an Infant Development Program (later Family Enrichment Program) in 1978.

## Sudbury Foundation 1922



*St. Josephs Convent, Sudbury, 1922-1956.*

**St. Joseph's Convent** on Louis Street, Sudbury was built in 1922 to accommodate the Sister teachers requested by Bishop Scollard from the Peterborough Congregation. St. Aloysius School was built shortly afterwards; two Sisters who taught in this School went on to be elected General Superiors: Sister Cecelia (Devine) and Sister St. Bride (Watters). St. Thomas and St. Albert School were soon opened in this fast growing city. "The new convent was well built and very comfortable, but schools grew so rapidly in size and number that more Sisters were needed. Two years later an addition provided more music rooms, a Chapel and a kitchen. When it was finished, it was a substantial structure, and provided accommodation for fifteen Sisters. The Community paid one hundred dollars a month rent to [the Diocese], and later purchased the convent for twenty-four thousand dollars" (*As the Tree Grows-Sisters of St. Joseph of Peterborough*, Eileen Gahagan, CSJ-PET)

In Fort William, St. Agnes Convent was assumed in 1945 and St. Joseph's Convent was assumed in 1948 by the CSJ-SSM.