



The *Great* Canadian Catholic Hospital History Project

Documenting the legacy and contribution of the
Congregations of Religious Women in Canada,
their mission in health care, and the founding and operation of Catholic hospitals.



Projet de la *Grande* Histoire des hôpitaux catholiques au Canada

Retracer l'héritage et la contribution des
congrégations de religieuses au Canada,
leur mission en matière de soins de santé ainsi que la fondation et l'exploitation des hôpitaux catholiques.

St. Joseph's General Hospital Elliot Lake, Ontario Fifty Years of Caring 1959-2009

The Elliot Lake Standard newspaper supplement
Elliot Lake, Ontario
Wednesday, October 28, 2009

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ST. JOSEPH'S GENERAL HOSPITAL ELLIOT LAKE

1959-2009

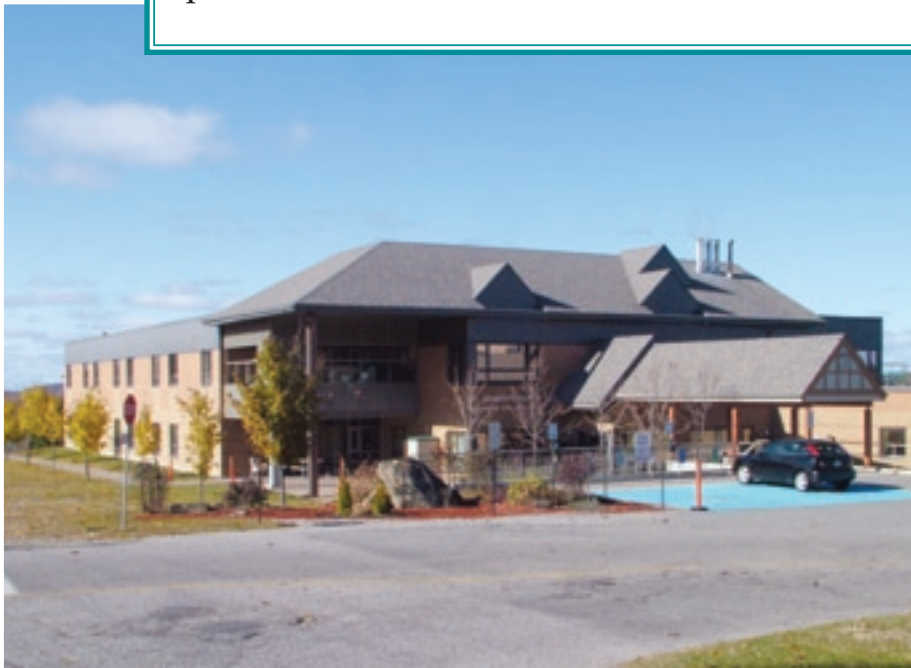
 **50th** ANNIVERSARY
Caring for The Community



› 50 YEARS OF CARING ›

It all started 50 years ago when The Sisters of St. Joseph came to Elliot Lake to establish a hospital to care for all those who entered its doors. Through their efforts and the efforts of hundreds of staff and volunteers, St. Joseph's Manor and The Oaks Treatment Centre were subsequently established, giving the community the caring services we enjoy today.

Your business can be a part of St. Joseph's 50th Anniversary celebrations by supporting an ad in this commemorative edition. It offers an excellent opportunity to extend congratulations and promote your products and services at the same time.



the
Standard
Special Supplement



1959-2009

St. Joseph's General Hospital owes its success to community support

As St. Joseph's General Hospital's chief executive officer, it is my pleasure to express my sincere appreciation to the people of Elliot Lake and area for the support they have provided to our organization during our first 50 years of operation. The hospital, St. Joseph's Manor and the Oaks Centre owe much of their success to the support received from our community. Our community's legacy of support can be traced back to the mid 1950s when the mine employees donated a day's pay to support the development of the community's hospital.

Individuals, businesses and service clubs continue to support our mission through donations and as trustees, members of our auxiliary and as volunteers. The support of our community has enabled St. Joseph's to maintain community-based hospital services and to add a nursing home, an addictions' treatment centre, a renal dialysis unit, a chemotherapy clinic and a busy visiting specialists clinic to our catalogue of services.

I am confident that our physicians and employees will continue to enjoy passionate support from our community so they can continue to meet your health care needs as close to home as possible.



Mike Hukezalie, CEO of St. Joseph's General Hospital

Sincerely,
Mike Hukezalie
CEO - St. Joseph's General Hospital Elliot Lake

Congratulations from St. Joseph's Foundation of Elliot Lake

Congratulations to St. Joseph's General Hospital for our community. St. Joseph's Foundation of Elliot Lake looks forward to purchasing medical equipment and furnishings that will assist St. Joseph's General Hospital to continue in the tradition of providing quality health care – for the next 50 years.

Connie Nykyforak, Chair of St. Joseph's Foundation of Elliot Lake board

Connie Nykyforak, Chair of St. Joseph's Foundation of Elliot Lake board



Connie Nykyforak, Chair of St. Joseph's Foundation of Elliot Lake board

St. Joseph's General Hospital's early days

By SISTER BONNIE MacLELLAN
General Superior -
The Sisters of St. Joseph of
Sault Ste. Marie

How does one reflect on 50 years of relationship, support, and love? A hospital to serve the needs of this new community was uppermost in the minds of officials of the mining companies when it first became obvious that large ore bodies were to be developed. However, it was found impossible to include this item when finances were

being negotiated for mine construction. In 1956, the municipality undertook to assist in financing a hospital, but it also was unable to proceed due to a lack of market for debentures of this type. In 1957, the mining companies, led by the Rio Tinto Group and several citizens, headed by Dr. Jas. Ruse and Ed Blahay, joined forces. From discussions and studies insti-

gated by the group, they determined that administrators such as the Order of the Sisters of St. Joseph were best equipped to construct and operate a hospital. The sisters agreed to accept the challenge to construct and operate a hospital, designed to serve a population of 20,000 to 25,000, no matter of race, colour or creed. Sod turning was held on Oct. 27, 1957, and on Aug. 30, 1958, group of five sisters left North Bay for Elliot Lake to take residence in a trailer park – lot 18 – facing Highway 108. Sister Camillus was the first hospital administrator and superior of the group of sisters; Sister Teresa Marie was named principal of Our Lady of Fatima new school; Sister Mary Bernard taught Grade 3; Sister Mar-

guerite – Grade 5; and Sister St. Robert – Grade 1 and the music in all grades as supervisor. Sister Camillus, as superior of the hospital that was under construction, was supported by Sister Fidelis, supervisor of maternity and Sister Florence, office manager. They joined the sisters in Elliot when living quarters in the residence were available.

Continued on page C3

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Algoma-Manitoulin

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1959-2009



Sister Camillus was hospital's first administrator



Sister Camillus was the first administrator at St. Joseph's General Hospital in Elliot Lake. Photos supplied

Continued from page C2

Sister Camillus noted in correspondence kept in our archives, "To see sisters in Elliot Lake was something, but to see them driving a car was most distracting to some other motorists. But the people were most gracious and welcomed the sisters. You would often hear the remark, 'First time I've seen a sister and the first time I've ever seen a sister driving a car!' There were 62 trailers in this park and every other family has a dog or cat. People are all young couples with several children."

While the hos-

pital was being constructed, the sis-

ters lived in a trailer – but this was not the mobile home trailers we enjoy today, that include the luxuries of home. In this trailer, they first prayed in the morning, attended Mass at the church, which was one mile away, then taught during the day or worked to transform the desire for a hos-

pital into architects' renderings. The space they lived in was too small to accommo-

date the number of sisters who were liv-

ing there, so at night, after making dinner and cleaning up, they would roll a cot into the kitchen for Sister Patricia McNamara (Marguerite) to sleep on. While we look at this today and wonder how they did it, this was a common experience for all our Elliot Lake pio-



Sister Bonnie MacLellan - General Superior - The Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie

neers. There were bunk-houses for the miners and contractors, and make-shift accom-

modation for families who were pouring into the area in order to support their families and find a new home. While these sisters were diligently work-

ing in the classrooms where there were two shifts of classes because there were too many students, Sister Camillus was

planning for the con-

struction of the new hospital, which would boast "all modern facilities" – but she was not doing this alone.

Continued on page C6



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1959-2009

Elliot Lake loves its hospital: former CEO

By SHANNON QUESNEL
Of The Standard

Wonderful is how Sister Sarah Quackenbush remembers her time at St. Joseph's General Hospital.

"I think the people of Elliot Lake have always adopted the hospital as their own," she explains, and considers that the key to SJGH's success.

The former nurse worked in Elliot Lake three times over three decades.

"You saw a town go from a very worried state to moving to the economic development of retirement living.

"Moving from a very young vibrant community to moving to a very senior community and finding creative ways to deliver services."

She recalled some of her tales at SJGH's 50th anniversary celebration last month. It was a bit of a reunion as many former and current staff as well as hospital supporters had not seen each other in years.

"We were (also) able to retell the stories of the sisters," says Quackenbush.

Her Elliot Lake journey began in 1965 when she left North Bay to take a posting in the boomtown where she studied advance nursing.

She knew about the mining community from having grown up in Sudbury. Elliot Lake was booming back when she was in high school.

It was a different story when she got here in the mid-1960s.

"The mines had closed,



Sister Sarah Quackenbush was once the CEO of St. Joseph's General Hospital. She attended the hospital's 50th anniversary last month.
Photo by Kevin McSheffrey

big changes.

"Well, I was all excited. The town had picked up, we had all new extensions, a new subdivision. The hospital had built a new addition. It was busy, active and had lots of young mining families.

"And it wasn't quite two years when they announced the mines were going to close."

After the announcement, and for the next 10 years, SJGH adjusted how it did business to meet the city's changing demographic as the community moved from a one-industry formula to a retirement centre.

"We evolved how we did health care by looking at totally different kinds of needs, like new specialists we would require."

SJGH pursued dialysis equipment, cardiac specialists, an expanded intensive care unit, orthopedics and neurology resources. The specialist count ballooned to 25 people.

"The kind of people we (now) treated were more ill," she says, than the ones in 1965.

Quackenbush says the staff adapted and the number of volunteers increased.

"It was very trying."


However, medical staff did things they never would have dreamed of doing she says, such as lobbying for a long-term care facility and hiring new workers for the new addictions and detox centre.

These days, instead of replacing bandages and consoling ill patients, Quackenbush spends her time as the vice-president of the Catholic Health Corporation of Ontario, from her office in Sudbury.

Looking back on her boomtown days, she says it was a singular experience.

"I think the really unique thing about working in Elliot Lake is the wonderful support of the people and the staff."

Carol Hughes,
MP/Députée
Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing
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almost, and it was half occupied and was kind of in a downturn.

"Half of the houses were boarded up. And there were questions about the future of the town at that time."

Nursing in Elliot Lake was a little different than in other communities.

"It was a pretty

young community then. We did not have nearly the amount of older people. You had accidents and minor surgeries."

She left two years later, but returned in 1970 and stayed until 1972. The city's fortunes were a bit better then, but not by much.

Her third time at the hospital Quackenbush served as its chief executive officer from 1987 to 1999. During that time she saw



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1959-2009



Marking St. Joseph's General Hospital's golden anniversary

By KEVIN MCSHEFFREY
Of The Standard

St. Joseph's General Hospital (SJGH) in Elliot Lake celebrated its 50th anniversary of delivering health care to the people of Elliot Lake and the area.

The hospital officially opened on Sept. 12, 1959.

The event, held on Sept. 11 and 12, had a staff appreciation gathering at the Collins Hall that saw 107 people attend.

On the afternoon of Sept. 12, there was a ribbon cutting to commemorate the opening of the hospital, which also attracted a number of people.

That evening, the 50th anniversary dinner was held at the Collins Hall, which attracted 208 people. The gala attracted cur-

rent and former hospital staff members, spouses, members of the public and about 12 sisters from the Sisters of St. Joseph to which the hospital belongs.

Some of those who attended the event travelled from across the province, with the farthest coming from London, Ontario, said Tom Rogers, chair of the hospital's anniversary committee.

Following the dinner, a number of dignitaries addressed the crowd at the gala. They reminisced about when the hospital first opened, which had all the modern conveniences of the day.

SJGH CEO Mike Hukezalie spoke of the future of the hospital.

"Much of what we have accomplished over the last 50 years is

the result of the unwavering support we have received from a large body of volunteers, including our auxiliary, volunteers at the hospital, the manor, the Oak's Centre, the contributions of our trustees and the countless service club members who continue to support us.

"As I contemplate the future, I am confident that our many supporters will be there to contribute to our continued success."

Hukezalie said, "Every organization worth its salt contemplated the future and plans for it."

SJGH's strategic plan, which is being revised is on its website for people to review at www.sjgh.ca.

He said they also want public feedback



On the afternoon of Sept. 12 of this year, Sister Bonnie MacLellan - General Superior - The Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie and Raymond Racine - chair of the St. Joseph's General Hospital board cut the ribbon marking the ribbon cutting on Sept. 12 1959. They were accompanied by Mike Hukezalie, the hospital's CEO.

Photo by Roger Gauthier

on the strategic plan. Mayor Rick Hamilton praised the Sisters of St. Joseph as well as former and current doctors, hospital staff

and volunteers for what they did the community. "Fifty years of service is a testament to hard work, dedication and

caring," said Hamilton. "I am profoundly proud to be in a community that shares that passion for all of its citizens," Hamilton added.

On behalf of our staff and clients we congratulate the doctors, nurses, staff, board of trustees and the hundreds of volunteers past and present for 50 years of exceptional care in our community.

Thank you
ST JOSEPH'S GENERAL HOSPITAL



St Joseph's General Hospital

I would like to take this time to congratulate the board and staff members plus the hundreds of volunteers who have provided the best of care for our citizens and visitors for 50 years in Elliot Lake.



From myself, council and the people of Elliot Lake we thank you for your dedication and service.





1959-2009

Funding for St. Joseph’s General Hospital came from several sources

Continued from page C3

She was supported by the people of Elliot Lake.

An advisory board was appointed in April of 1958, made up of local residents to advise on matters pertaining to property, finances, public relations, legal affairs and in general promoting the best interests of the hospital. Because of growing needs of the community for hospital care, the nurses’ residence was used as a temporary maternity hospital. This service commenced in December 1958.

Twelve months later, on Oct. 26, 1958, the corner stone was laid.

In June of 1959, the initial medical staff was appointed, composed entirely of local doctors. In early 1959, the construction routine was altered to provide an emergency service prior to opening the entire hospital.

Hospital funding in 1959

Now all of this occurred before publicly funded health care was the norm – there was no provincial money to build or fund the operation of hospitals.

The hospital was opened on Sept. 12, 1959 and cost a total

of \$3.15 million. What would that mean in today’s dollars? That would translate in 2008 dollars to \$23,828,599.97.

Funding sources included: the mining companies donated \$1 million (\$7,564,634.29 in today’s dollars); the federal government contributed \$700,000 (\$5,295,244.44); local community fund-raising of \$125,000 (\$945,579.36); a municipal grant of \$500,000 (\$3,782,317.46). The sisters contributed \$825,000 (\$6,240,823.80).

This is how the money for the construction was raised, but it says nothing of the spirit and heart connection between the people of Elliot Lake and the Sisters of St. Joseph.

The sisters and the people of Elliot Lake formed a long and lasting bond during these days.

The women’s auxiliary of the hospital was known as one of the town’s busiest organizations, with 300 members. The auxiliary’s first gift to the hospital was a gift to each mom and baby of Elliot Lake. The auxiliary later provided the \$400 needed to purchase a modern, up-to-date scale that “completely eliminated the guess



St. Joseph’s General Hospital was built to serve miners and younger families. Today, it has changed its focus and many of the patients are seniors.

Photo by Kevin McSheffrey

work on the part of the nurse weighing-in the new arrival.”

St. Joseph’s General Hospital in 2009

Today, we celebrate not only the 50th anniversary of St. Joseph’s Hospital. We celebrate 50 years of relationship; 50 years of commitment; and 50 years of service. We celebrate the administration and leadership of the hospital over the years, including Sister Camillus, Sister Sheila; Sister Miriam Downey, Sister Marjorie Shan-

non, Sister Sarah Quackenbush - - and dare I say, “Brother Mike Hukezalie?” And who will forget Sister Leona Marchand – our “Dolly” who was the administrator of the school of nursing for over 20 years, and who, even in her advanced years, struggled with the decision to leave Elliot Lake, wanting to continue to be connected to the community she loved so much

We celebrate more than a building. We celebrate a belief that all people deserve to

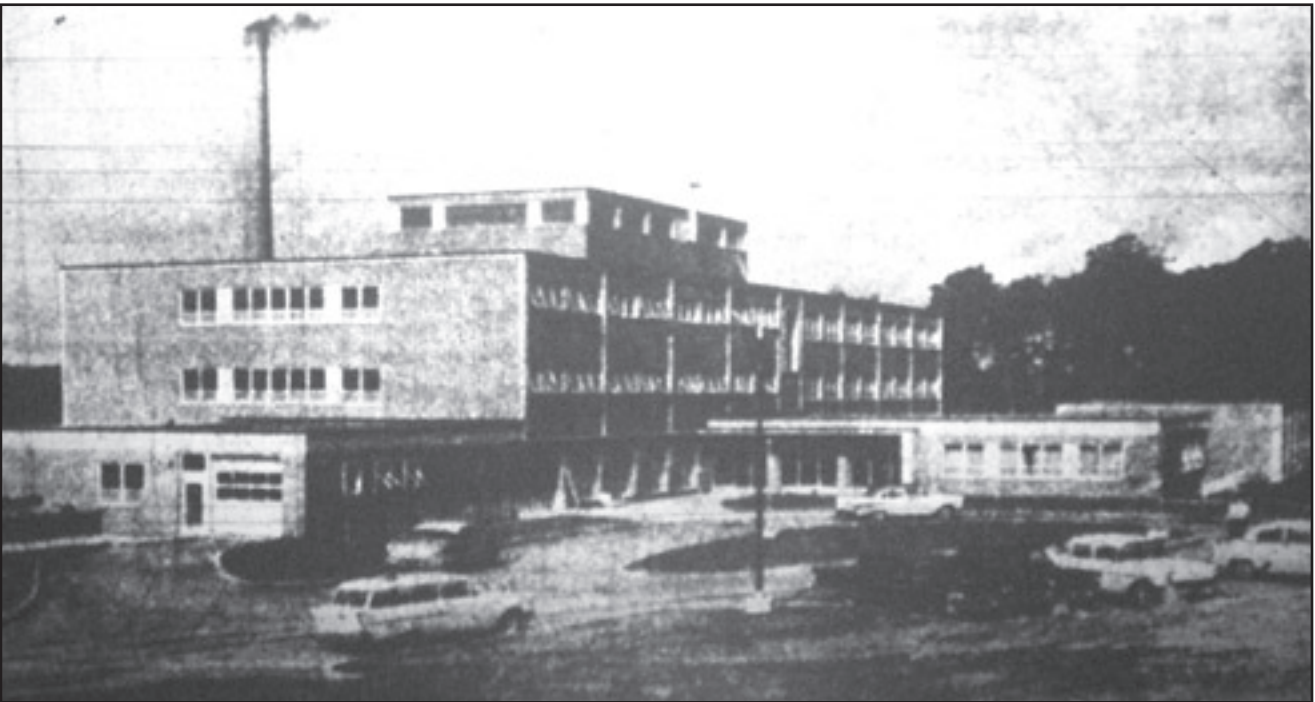
be cared for – at all stages of our lives, from conception to natural death. We celebrate the ongoing commitment of the board and administration of St. Joseph’s to continue to the legacy of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie to respond to unmet needs in our community, and to continue to forge lasting relationships that have as their underpinnings God’s desire that all people have life and have it to the full.

You may not see

sisters in Elliot Lake driving a car to Mass today, but we are with you in spirit and continue to support health care in this community with and through the Catholic Health Corporation of Ontario.

On behalf of my congregation, I want to thank you for the privilege of serving you in this community for over 50 years, and we look forward to continuing to create a future for this community that is “full of hope.”

God bless you.



In 1959, St. Joseph’s General Hospital was a modern health care facility of its day. It was operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie.

Standard file photo

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1959-2009



St. Joseph's General Hospital's memories in photographs



A \$40,000 CHEQUE was presented to St. Joseph's General Hospital this week by the hospital fund committee. Making the presentation to Sister Camillus is Murray Airth, chairman of the fund drive. Standing at left is R. C. Hart, trustee board chairman. At right, is Rev. R. J. Farrell of Our Lady of Fatima Church.



The Standard 1978 - Head nurse of the pediatrics ward, Sud Macknight, takes the blood pressure of five-year-old Andrew Duncan, a young patient who recently had his tonsils removed.

... and onto the next
50 years of serving Elliot Lake
and area residents.



The Standard 1978 - Sister Marjorie Shannon: The complex task of overseeing the day-to-day operation of a modern hospital such as St. Joseph's General falls to the capable hands of Sister Marjorie Shannon. Her job runs the gamut from doctor-patient relationships to meeting with high-level Health Ministry officials in her constant effort to maintain the hospital's high standard of care. Sister Marjorie has been administrator of the hospital since 1974. She is one of six sisters of the Order of St. Joseph who work at various medical jobs within the building. Although a registered nurse, Sister finds most of her time is taken with overseeing hospital activities.



The Standard 1978 - Emergency services at St. Joseph's Hospital will soon be improved, following expansion plans. From left are Dr. P.R. McLean, Clea Sarich, head nurse of emergency; an emergency patient, Kirk Mechefske, and hospital administrator Sister Marjorie Shannon.

The Standard 1958

**Nuns Impressed
By New Site For
100-Bed Hospital**

Elliot Lake — Representatives of the religious order, Sisters of St. Joseph, visited the new hospital site that has been selected by the board of trustees and were much impressed by its location, trustee chairman R. C. Hart said last week.

Mr. Hart is also interim chairman of the board for the proposed 100-bed hospital that will be built in the townsite.

The Sisters of the St. Joseph, whose mother-house is in North Bay, have been approached to operate the new hospital. An announcement is expected in the near future.

The new site is located south and west of Westview Crescent in Neighbourhood Number One, and overlooks Elliot Lake. The former site was located opposite the commercial area on Hillside Drive North.

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