



# Foundations

Number Four ~ October 2018

## St. Joseph's Hospital Radway, Alberta

To Commemorate 53 Years of Service  
by the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception  
Radway Hall ~ April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1980\*



The Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception came to Radway Alberta in 1926 and continuously from that time to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1979, a total of 53 years, rendered loving, faithful and excellent hospital care at St. Joseph's Hospital and St. Joseph's Health Care Centre. During that term 38 Sisters came to serve at Radway, four of that number have died, the remaining have retired to serve in various capacities in their centres across Canada.

Tonight the Community of Radway honors the Order of the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception, now in its 126<sup>th</sup> year in Canada, but especially commends those Sisters who came to serve and administer their works of medical charity in our midst.

\* This article was originally written and printed for the celebration ceremonies. Copies were typed, mimeographed and handed out to participants. Used with permission.

During the memorable week of June 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, 1976, when the new St. Joseph's Health Care Centre was officially opened and blessed, the event coincided with 50 years of service at Radway by the Sisters. The keynote speaker at the celebrations then, His Excellency, Bishop Jerome Isidore Chimy, OSBN Ukrainian Catholic Bishop of British Columbia, who was born at Radway, said:

“Medical charity has its beginnings in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. It embraces all people without distinction of race, color or social status. It also embraces the seven corporal works of mercy: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick, ransoming the captive and burying the dead.

“I congratulate and thank the Sisters,” he said then, “My family and the whole community is thankful to them and proud of the Sisters.”



### PROGRAM

Opening remarks:

Master of Ceremonies John P. Yurkiw

Invocation: His Excellency Bishop Raymond Roy

### BANQUET

Introduction of Honored Guests and Visitors by the Master of Ceremonies

Greetings from:

Mayor of Radway: John Onyschuk

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## St. Joseph's Hospital, Radway, Alberta

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The Honorable George Topolnisky, M.L.A.

Toasts to the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception:

Tony Styra

Reply:

Sister Frances Rooney

### ENTERTAINMENT

Sherrill L. DeMarco and Edmonton Local Talent

### SPEAKERS

Chairman of Hospital Board, John Onyschuk

St. Joseph's Health Care Centre, Walter Chaba

Other Speakers:

Presentations: Mrs. Martha Pryma

Closing Remarks: John P. Yurkiw

building with Sister Aimiee (Pepin) and Sister Mary Joseph (Schell). On looking over the situation, they immediately set to work: one room for the kitchen, two for the sick, and one for themselves. The lean-to would serve as a chapel, or surgery, as needed.

Among the hospital supplies ordered out from Edmonton: the hospital beds and equipment, a roasting pan to sterilize surgical instruments, were also the wash tub, boiler and scrub board for Sister Joseph, the housekeeper, to assist her in her onerous task of daily washing the hospital bedding by hand.

All water must be carried from the well, frozen sheets draped over lines in the small kitchen to dry. In summer, the task could be performed outdoors with water heated on an outdoor fireplace. Of course there were no plumbing facilities to assist in the care of the sick, the little outhouse at the end of the lot must suffice. As many as 12 patients were cared for at one time. In all, 145 patients received care in the 18 months of pioneer hospital work.

Charges ranged from 50¢ to \$2.00 per day and bills were often paid by gifts of fresh meat and vegetables which Sister Joseph cooked for the patients and nurses and often for relatives of the sick who came over long distances by wagon or sleigh.

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### HISTORICAL BEGINNINGS OF HOSPITAL SERVICE AT RADWAY

After the arrival of the Canadian Northern Railway line in 1917, the settlement called Radway began to flourish on land purchased from Mr. Orlando Radway. A flour mill, creamery and school, the first elevators, hotel, machine shop, several houses and stores were built. Just across the street from Knat Pawluk's General Store, a four room log house was built and used as a nursing station for a short time. A call for missionary nursing sisters was answered by the Sisters of Charity, and in the Fall of 1926 three graduates arrived from the New Brunswick School of Nursing.

Although we have no record of actual events, we can imagine Sister Mary Benedicta (Johnston), the Superior, then in middle life, arriving at the door of the log



Sister Joseph, Sister Aimiee, Sister Benedicta  
in front of the first St. Joseph's Hospital Radway



**St. Joseph's Hospital, Radway, Alberta**

*All photos courtesy of the Archives of the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception, Saint John, New Brunswick*



The old kitchen of St. Joseph's Hospital in Radway, Alberta. 1952  
Sr. Rita Carmel (Philomena Duchscherer) with Mary and Rose, kitchen staff.



Sr. Stella Maris and Sr. Rita Carmel in the cornfield,  
St. Joseph's Hospital in Radway, Alberta



St. Joseph's Hospital in Radway, Alberta  
Medical records room

## St. Joseph's Hospital, Radway, Alberta

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Plans were soon underway for the building of the new red brick St. Joseph's Hospital. Sometimes the Sisters would slip up in the evening to watch the building progress. When it was completed in June, 1928, people came with horses and wagons and trucks to help move furniture from the old hospital to the beautiful new structure with its fresh white walls and wooden floors. There were 14 beds and six bassinets, a pharmacy located in a small room on the first floor and on the third floor, two dormitory rooms for the Sisters.

A generator was installed to provide electricity for the hospital, water from a well was piped into the kitchen and carried by pail to all floors. Acquiring sufficient water became a problem and sapped the Sisters' earnings. In 1930 a 500 foot well gave salty water with a mixture of natural gas. For a time the gas was used for heating water, until someone questioned its safety.

An insight into the life and traditions of the people the Sisters of Charity came to serve is seen by the varied ethnic and Christian backgrounds. As early as 1911, the Ukrainian Catholic Church at Eldorena was erected and in 1913 the St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, two miles south of Radway; the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Christ's Ascension was built in Radway in 1920. At Skaro, in 1919, the beautiful outdoor Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes became an important centre of religious life. The United Church held services at a 'Mission' house in the early years and the Sisters of Charity provided a room where Father Hughes

could administer the sacraments. Even as the hospital was completed, St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church was being built with the first celebration of Mass in November, 1928. Young people went carolling during the Christmas Season. People donated generously of their time and building skills.

Social life centred around traditional Christian feasts, weddings, funerals and community affairs. Families were large—even to ten children were commonplace. Economy and 'make do' were watchwords of the times, with the long Depression that gripped the Western World. The Sisters continued to gratefully receive donations to the hospital larder. As well, they kept a few cows, fed a few pigs and raised a large kitchen garden.

Dr. Nicholas Holubitsky, who came in 1929 and stayed until 1944, was much respected and loved by the Sisters. Of them he is quoted as saying: "I found them to be the most pleasant, humane, dedicated and co-operative young ladies I have ever met."

Events and cases came in endless succession to the hospital, which in one year achieved 1700 patients. Memories, no doubt, remain with those who received the benefit of care at St. Joseph's Hospital. Sister Mabel Foster (Stella Maris) came to Radway in 1935 and worked under pioneer conditions. From her diary which covers the period to 1964, we are able to glean the following:

"We sterilized all the baby formulas, nipples and surgical instruments. We could not afford the ready-to-use intravenous and intrastital solutions; we made and sterilized our own—also the cocaine and novocaine solutions. When transfusions were needed they were given directly by syringe or open flask method. No antibiotics for infections, only careful work and prayer. How wonderful later to have the Red Cross Blood service, intravenous and other solutions, sterile and ready.

"As financial strains lifted we availed ourselves of all equipment needed to give first rate service to our sick. I distinctly remember our joy at being able to send a sick man to Edmonton by ambulance. From the beginning the Sisters pinch hit for barbers, morticians and undertakers, standing by to assist until final arrangements could be made by the family. How grateful we were when funeral homes



Baptizing premature twins.  
St. Joseph's Hospital in Radway, Alberta



## St. Joseph's Hospital, Radway, Alberta

in Lamont and Edmonton came to provide funeral services.

“Hospital life is not really all work and no play. We have happy memories of picnic lunches in the field behind the hospital. We had ball games and sing-songs. One winter we had catechism at school.

In June, 1979, Sister Patricia Wallace announced the intention of the Sisters of Charity to withdraw from Hospital care at Radway. The smooth transfer of hospital administration to a new staff was accomplished and on December 31, 1979, the Sisters of Charity had officially closed the book on the final pages of their medical services in Radway, Alberta.

However, before Sister Wallace, Sister Shea and Sister Dooley left us, they took with them assurances from the people that their contribution was much appreciated.

A final note may be sounded on the keys of the new Yamaha piano which graces the sitting room of the Radway Health Care Centre. With their departure pending, Sister Wallace used funds remaining from the Craft Shop, plus a \$500 private donation and \$300 from the Ladies Hospital Auxiliary to purchase this lasting gift. The inscription on the piano reads “From

the Benefactors of the Sisters of Charity.” It has been and will be much appreciated at the Health Care Centre during Christmas Carol-fests, the Senior Citizens’ birthday parties when the Auxiliary ladies sing and other opportunities of entertainment at the Centre. It is a lasting tribute to the cooperation of the Sisters and the Community. Our Thanks.

To all the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception who came to live among us: “We have missed you; we shall miss you. MIZPAH\*”

May the Lord Watch between we and thee  
While we are absent  
One from another. (Genesis 31:49)

Written for the occasion of Honoring the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception at Radway Hall, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1980. Errors and omissions excepted.

Mary B. Mark

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\* Mizpah is Hebrew for “watchtower.” As mentioned in the Bible story of Jacob and Laban, making a pile of stones marked an agreement, an emotional bond between two people, with God as their watching witness.



St. Joseph's Hospital in Radway, Alberta ~ 1959

## APPENDIX ONE

# Embers from the Archives Saint Joseph's Hospital, Radway, Alberta 1926–1979

by Sister Monica Plante, scic

At that Council meeting of January 28, 1926 we note the following entry:

*At this meeting the application for houses to be opened in the West was read and discussed. It was decided to accept the Mission at Radway Centre and to keep Vancouver, until a later date.*

Jan. 28, 1926  
Mother M. Alphonsus  
Sister M. Francesca,  
Secretary General

This call for missionary nursing Sisters was answered in the fall of that year. Little did the Sisters know what awaited them in this small village. A small four room log cabin (previously vacated by two nurses who attempted to make the beginning of a hospital there) was to become the mission field of these early Sisters.

We can imagine Sister M. Benedicta Johnston, the Superior, then in middle life, arriving at the door of the log building with Sister Aimee Pepin and Sister M. Joseph Schell. On looking over the situation they immediately set to work—one room for the kitchen, two for the sick, one for themselves; the lean-to would serve as a chapel or surgery as needed.

Sister M. Electa King arrived a short time later from Holy Family Nursing School in Prince Albert. We read her first impressions:

"I arrived in Radway, unknown. There were just three Sisters there. It was a shack. I was horrified. There were no bathroom facilities whatever. We had, off the kitchen, a small pantry affair that the Sisters used for a bedroom.

There were three iron cots and we had to climb over one another to get to our cot. Sister M. Joseph was the cook and housekeeper and had the task of washing the hospital bedding by hand."

Rates for hospital stays ranged from fifty cents to two dollars per day, but cash was rare, so payment was made by patients paid by giving meat, vegetables, chickens, and even a live hog. The Sisters had their own garden and raised chickens, cows and hogs. In spite of all these hardships, these four Sisters rendered professional nursing to 145 patients during the 18 months they resided in this log cabin.

With the opening of a red brick building with twenty beds in 1928, the hospital now boasted of electricity produced by its own generator. This arrangement lasted until 1959 when the hospital was rewired and hooked up to the Calgary Power Company. There was still a problem with water. After three attempts, a well was struck that produced salt water and natural gas which was useful only to bathe the patients. Gas from the well was piped to the floors to be used for heating water until its danger was realized. Water in the soda water well was good for cooking and drinking. By 1959, the town of Radway finally set up its own water system which was a benefit to the hospital as well.

During these pioneer days, the hospital looked after the unwed mothers set up by the Welfare Department in Edmonton. Sisters also acted as undertakers by providing coffins and preparing bodies for the funerals. The Sister Nurse on night duty also stoked the furnace. In between times the Sisters made up little baskets and visited the poor

## St. Joseph's Hospital, Radway, Alberta

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and forsaken of the village including Mr. Wong's Chinese store.

It seems that the Sisters were ready to leave Radway in 1935 but a letter from Bishop Lussier to Mother M. Joan refused permission for the Sisters to leave until another Religious Community was found to take over. None was found so the Sisters of Charity remained and carried on.

It was in 1974 that the Department of Health and Welfare decided to allow the replacement of the old hospital building with a Health Care Centre. By June 26, 1976 the Saint Joseph's Health Care Centre was official opened to replace St. Joseph's Hospital which served as an active treatment hospital since 1928. Sister M. Quigg was Administrator with Sisters Mabel Foster and Rita Duchscherer on staff. Sister Philomena Gallant lived close by and was the Matron of the Thorhild Senior Citizens' Lodge from 1974–1979.

After the Centre opened, the Sisters had the old hospital renovated for a residence and moved into it from their trailer. Four Sisters of Charity lived there with six Polish Sisters from Poland.

A year later in 1977 the town of Radway paid tribute to two faithful and much loved Sisters. Sister Mabel Foster (who served for 29 years) and Sister Rita Duchscherer (who served for 32 years) in both Radway Hospital and Town activities were now leaving for other appointments. The same year Sister Patricia Wallace became the Administrator with Sister Margaret Shea as Director of Nursing with Sister Margaret Dooley on staff.

On December 31, 1979, the Sisters of Charity ended an era of over five decades of nursing the sick, the poor and the elderly in this area of Radway. Seven Sisters of two different orders from Poland remained on staff at the Health Centre.

The Sisters of Charity donated the Hospital building to the Diocese of St. Paul. It was set up as John Paul II Catholic Bible School and is now, in 2007, celebrating its 23 year of successful operation.

When St. Joseph builds, it lasts forever!

Sister Monica Plante, scic  
Archivist  
October 11, 2007



Radway Health Centre 1999



APPENDIX TWO

**Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception  
Missioned at Radway, Alberta, 1926 – 1979**



<b>Baptismal Name</b>	<b>Religious Name</b>	<b>Years of Service</b>
Mary Ann Johnston	M. Benedicta	1926–1933; 1936–1939
Louise King	M. Electa	1926–1930
Alice Pepin	M. Aimee	1926–1939
Anna Schell	M. Joseph	1926–?
Mary Campbell	M. Cleophas	1927–?
Anne Fix	M. Julienne	1931–1932; 1933–1937
Ellen Johnston	M. Bonaventure	1932–1936*
Helene Sklar	M. Damien	1932*–1937
Lillian Noonan	M. Delphina	1933*–1936; 1946–1954
Mary Dalton	M. Virginia	1935–1936
Mabel Foster	Stella Maris	1935–1941; 1957–1977
Rose Anne Goan	M. Martha	1935–1936
Rose Schafer	M. Winifred	1936–1938; 1944–1953; 1964–1972
Mary Horak	M. Wenceslaus	1937–1941
Philomena Gallant	M. Florina Supervisor at Thorhild:	1937–1944 1974–1979
Mary Riordan	M. Floracita	1937–1938
Genevieve Carroll	M. Wilfreda	1939–1966
Mary Ann Giesinger	M. Esther	1940–1943



Baptismal Name	Religious Name	Years of Service
Rosetta Norden	M. Aloysius	1940–1941; 1944–1947
Jane Stewart	M. Rosina	1940–1945
Cecelia Martz	M. Alexina	1941–1944; 1957–1963
Marie Ecker	M. Aelred	1942–1944*; 1945*–1950
Diana Harsch	M. Therese	1942–1949; 1954–1959
Mary Sullivan	M. Eileen	1942–1947
Elizabeth Keohan	M. Vincentia	1944–1947
Philomena “Rita” Duchscherer	Rita Carmel	1945–1974*
Marie Alice Gagnon	M. Xavier	1945–1948
Eve Peters	M. Benedict	1946–1948; 1966 (2 months)
Margaret Kervin	Joseph Marie	1950–1957
Theresa Kilfoil	Myra	1950–1966
Henrietta Mutter	M. Katherine	1950–1953
Bridget Crain	Constance Marie	1953–1957
Marie E. Landry	M. de Paul	1966–1973
Mary Quigg	M. Lawrence	1973–1976
Jean Mulvaney	Mary James	1974 (5 months)
Patricia Wallace	M. Marcella	1976–1979
Margaret Dooley	M. Rose de Lima	1977–1979
Margaret Shea	M. Cajetan	1977–1979
Frances Bouska	Marie Martin	? – 1976
Margaret Hill	Margaret Mary	?

SCIC who appear on a list of Sisters missioned at Radway but whose presence there cannot be otherwise confirmed:

Helen Dillon	M. Bernice
Kathleen Kelly	M. Jacinta
Theresa Kergoat	M. Germaine
Rose Ketchum	
Frances Rooney	M. Jane Frances
Regina Sieber	M. Thomasina

\* Different sources give conflicting dates, the most trustworthy is given

Researched and compiled by:  
Lex Stephenson, MA  
Assistant Archivist  
SCIC Archives, Saint John, NB  
September 2018

APPENDIX THREE  
**Superiors**  
**at Radway, Alberta, 1926 – 1979**



<b>Baptismal Name</b>	<b>Religious Name</b>	<b>Years as Superior</b>
Mary Ann Johnston	M. Benedicta	1926 – 1932
Ellen Johnston	M. Bonaventure	1932* – 1935*
Rose Anne Goan	M. Martha	1935* – 1936*
Alice Pepin	M. Aimee	1936 – 1940*
Jane Stewart	M. Rosina	1940 – 1945
Elizabeth Keohan	M. Vincentia	1945 – 1947
Lillian Noonan	M. Delphina	1947* – 1954
Bridget Crain	Constance Marie	1954 – 1957
Cecelia Martz	M. Alexina	1957 – 1963
Mabel Foster	Stella Maris	1963 – 1966
Marie E. Landry	M. de Paul	1966 – 1973
Mary Quigg	M. Lawrence	1973 – 1976
Patricia Wallace	M. Marcella	1976 – 1979

*\* Different sources give conflicting dates, the most trustworthy is given.*

*Researched and compiled by:  
Lex Stephenson, MA  
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SCIC Archives, Saint John, NB  
September 2018*



APPENDIX FOUR

Doctors\* Who Practiced at St. Joseph's Hospital  
Radway, Alberta



Dr. Ruden (the first doctor)

Dr. Nicholas Holubitsky, who came in 1929 and stayed until 1944

Dr. Martens

Dr. Meer

Dr. Watt

Dr. Bostock

Dr. Stockburger

Dr. Turner

Dr. Scott

Dr. Amin

*\*This is a partial list.*



*Foundations* is a publication of the *The Great Canadian Catholic Hospital History Project* and the *Catholic Hospitals Digital History Books Collection* project which have as their mission "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." When a book or booklet of a Catholic hospital or nursing school is not available for digitizing, *Foundations* provides basic historical information and dates of the organization and the ministry of the Sisters.

**Greg J. Humbert**

*Foundations* Editor

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