



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.

The Story of St. Joseph's Hospital 1890-1960

by
Kingsley Brown

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**THE
STORY
OF
ST. JOSEPH'S
HOSPITAL
1890 - 1960**

BY KINGSLEY BROWN

St. Joseph's Hospital — Hamilton, Ontario

THE STORY OF ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

FOREWORD: The story of St. Joseph's Hospital is a story of service and growth. Its history has followed that familiar pattern that marks all vital, efficient public services. Competent service brings increased demand, followed by a crisis of inadequate space and facilities and, eventually, by expansion. It is a dynamic cycle, turning with time. If it were not so, it would not be a story of life.

Today, St. Joseph's is once again at the stage of crisis. Hamilton's swiftly growing population seeks far more service at St. Joseph's than the Hospital is physically able to supply. More beds and facilities are urgently needed. The situation is grave.

The following pages tell briefly the story of St. Joseph's Hospital and its place in the Hamilton community. If this is to continue to be a story of active, efficient service to the people of the Hamilton area, the Hospital must be expanded immediately.

The need has never been greater.



KINGSLEY BROWN is a noted Canadian journalist and a former member of the editorial staff of **The Hamilton Spectator**. At present, he is serving as Press Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Hon. Ellen L. Fairclough.

THE SISTERS COME TO HAMILTON

The cholera epidemic of 1854 was one of the most dreadful tribulations suffered by the community of Hamilton in its early years. It is not easy for modern minds to grasp the full horror of such an event, to sense the gripping panic that made even relatives shrink from their afflicted loved ones, not easy to feel the terror of the wretched victims isolated in dingy sheds and barns, bereft of medical care and mostly doomed to speedy death and consignment to a common grave.

Yet this fearful epidemic of 1854, unlike those of earlier years, was tempered by a new influence in the life of the young community. For the first time, the citizens of Hamilton became aware of the healing touch of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Only two years previously, a tiny group of dedicated Sisters, whose Order is devoted to the care of the poor and the sick, had come to Hamilton and made their convent in a small stone house at the corner of Cannon and Macnab Streets.

The cholera of 1854 was the Sisters' first major challenge. It was not their last. Within a few months, with Hamilton still grieving for its cholera victims, typhus struck. In a temporary hospital in the old railway freight sheds, the Sisters of St. Joseph once more risked death and moved

fearlessly among the sick and dying. They earned for themselves and their Order the enduring respect of the people of Hamilton.

This service of love, performed more than 100 years ago, was the introduction of the Sisters of St. Joseph to the community of Hamilton. For the ensuing thirty years and more, from their convent at Park Street, the Sisters went daily through the City on their errands of healing and charity, nursing the sick, caring for orphans, comforting the poor. The dedicated "nursing sister" in her distinctive habit became a familiar and reassuring figure in hundreds of Hamilton homes.

THE FIRST HOSPITAL

In 1890, a wider opportunity for service presented itself when medical men and groups of citizens appealed to the Sisters of St. Joseph to establish a hospital to service the rapidly growing southwestern section of the city. On June 11 of that year, in a large, old residence on John Street which had been donated by the late Bishop Dowling, St. Joseph's was formally dedicated as a 25-bed hospital.

Its doors were open to all, regardless of race or creed, and its services were free to those who could not pay. From the very beginning the non-Catholic patients outnumbered those of the Roman Catholic faith, and the

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Sisters of St. Joseph quickly established their institution's reputation as a competent public service in which efficient, modern hospital practice walked hand in hand with Christian charity.

It is interesting to note that the first patient treated in St. Joseph's Hospital was a Mrs. Gilmour, identified in the register as "a Protestant lady," who was attended by a Dr. Rosenburgh, and, ten days after what is described as "a very successful operation," was able to go home.

Another early patient in the Hospital's first year was an actress from a travelling stage company performing the old musical "*The Gondoliers*." She was admitted to St. Joseph's with a severe case of erysipelas, but, according to the record, "was quite recovered in a few days and able to rejoin her troupe."

FIRST EXPANSION, 1894

The good works done at St. Joseph's Hospital in those first few years quickly impressed the people of Hamilton, with a quite natural result. Demand for bed space quickly outstripped the young hospital's facilities. The Sisters of St. Joseph were facing their first crisis of space. They met it with the addition of a new wing, the St. Ann's Wing, which doubled the bed capacity to a total of 50 beds.

Hamilton, of course, continued to grow, and St. Joseph's reputation grew with it, so that before long the need for new space again had become acute. A substantial surgical wing, adding more than 100 beds, was built in 1916, and in 1924 a separate maternity centre was created in Casa Maria, an old private residence adjoining the Hospital on Charlton Avenue. This brought the Hospital's bed capacity to 200.

GROWING WITH HAMILTON

In the meantime, St. Joseph's had passed another milestone in its history. In 1923, the medical staff was reorganized under the direction of Dr. H. J. Sullivan, its first chairman, and St. Joseph's Hospital was accorded Grade A status by the American College of Surgeons, a qualification recognized across the continent and marking the Hospital as a first-class institution in every respect.

All this, however, was but a beginning.

The Sisters found themselves continually pressed for more space and facilities. In 1941, Our Lady of Victory Wing was built to provide more adequate surgical and emergency service.

The war years brought fresh demands. Industrial Hamilton was growing by leaps and bounds, and its population with it. Hospital space

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was again in short supply, and seriously so. To meet this crisis, the "New Hospital" was built, an impressive cross-shaped structure filling out the corner of John Street and Charlton Avenue. Opened in 1947, it added 194 new beds and provided enlarged facilities for lab and X-ray investigations, surgical operations and out-patient treatments.

Just three years later, in 1950, the new Maternity Wing was completed, raising the Hospital's total capacity to its present size: 443 beds and 95 bassinets.

From a modest beginning 70 years ago, St. Joseph's Hospital has grown to magnificent stature. Today, it is one of the most modern hospital units in North America, and it continues to move forward. The recent addition of a radio-isotope department, under the direction of Dr. C. H. Jaimet and Mr. Harold Amy, who have done significant cancer research at McMaster University, marks St. Joseph's as an institution where the most advanced scientific skills serve the Christian arts of healing.

SCHOOL OF NURSING OPENS

The Sisters of St. Joseph very early embarked upon a further, related venture in the field of hospital service. The St. Joseph's School of Nursing was founded in 1911. The old residence of the late Adam Brown, on the

site of the present Undermount residence, served as a nurses' home, and the first class of eight young ladies was graduated at an impressive ceremony on January 22, 1915. Since its beginning, the School has seen 1500 nurses, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, pass through its doors.

St. Joseph's Hospital's interest in nursing education is not confined to its own School of Nursing. The Hospital provides training for students at the McMaster University School of Nursing, offers field work for teaching student-instructresses from the University of Western Ontario and Ottawa University, and provides classroom and ward facilities for the instruction of nursing assistants.

THE FINANCIAL PICTURE

The earliest records of the Hospital's administration are concerned with financial aspects of operation. At the end of the first year we find the Provincial Government proffering a grant in the amount of \$112, while the City of Hamilton remitted back (and really current) taxes in the amount of \$722, noting the fact that St. Joseph's Hospital "is a purely charitable institution."

Money needs, it seems, were ever present, but the Sisters solved them as best they could. Early history records that one of their more enter-

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prising and successful projects was a "Fancy Fair," a week-long program of auctions, rummage sales and entertainment, held in the old Drill Hall on James Street North to music provided by the 13th Battalion Band. This effort realized \$4,000, which by 1891 standards was quite a substantial sum.

In view of its great contribution to the community, it is not surprising that St. Joseph's has acquired a large family of friends and admirers, including an active Women's Auxiliary which was formed in 1945. Gifts and bequests from these supporters have helped the Sisters meet the cost of operating and expanding the Hospital through the years.

In the final analysis, however, it is the Sisters themselves who play the major role in providing philanthropic funds. They devote their lives to the Hospital's great and good cause. Their services are donated. They receive no financial reward for their work and toil. Instead, an amount equivalent to their combined salaries is set aside out of operating income and applied to enlarging and improving the Hospital. Were it not for the habit they wear, they would receive, as professional personnel, an estimated \$150,000 per year.

The Sisters do not hesitate to provide for the needs of others. For 70 years they have consistently met the challenge of providing more and more Hospital services and facilities for the people of the Hamilton area.

TODAY'S DEMAND IS DESPERATE

But this great Hamilton institution, St. Joseph's Hospital, is today facing the gravest crisis of its long history. Admissions during 1960 have totalled almost 25,000, approximately double the figure of 10 years ago, when the Hospital's most recent addition was completed. At the same time, out-patient treatments now number 65,000 a year, a hefty increase over 10 years ago.

Demand for bed space has reached the point where patients are entered on a waiting list that is already six weeks to three months in arrears. Some 2,000 men, women and children are awaiting beds under these conditions. Similarly, surgery facilities are booked solidly. Those in need of operations, if not emergency cases, must wait many weeks to have them performed.

Patients also suffer the inconvenience and distress of arranging to leave their work, of hiring housekeepers, of preparing to enter hospital, only to discover at the last moment that bed space is not available. A patient sometimes arrives, by prior arrangement, at the Hospital to find that his bed has been taken a half an hour earlier by an accident victim or serious heart case whose life hangs in the balance of short time and emergency treatment.

The impact of this multiplying demand for service places severe

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pressure on all departments in the Hospital, particularly X-ray, laboratories, surgery, emergency, out-patients, physiotherapy and paediatrics. A critical shortage of space and equipment creates extremely trying conditions for their increasingly important work. The strain on present facilities is becoming drastic. Expansion is urgent.

AN ANSWER TO THE PROBLEMS

The Sisters have not stood still, awaiting further complications. A start has been made on a program designed to resolve these mounting difficulties.

In consultation with their Advisory Board, architects and other hospital experts, the Sisters have developed plans for a large, new wing, to contain 400 patient beds and improved, expanded facilities for almost all supporting services. The program has the full approval of the City-appointed Hospital Advisory Committee and of the Ontario Hospital Services Commission, both of which have studied and acknowledged the need for more hospital facilities in the Hamilton area.

Construction of the new wing is now in progress on the James Street side of Hospital property, immediately west of the existing buildings. Total estimated cost is \$8,450,000, including equipment and furnishings.

FUNDS ARE NEEDED

Towards the total cost, St. Joseph's anticipates receiving \$3,050,000 in statutory capital grants from the Federal and Provincial governments. The City of Hamilton has granted \$2,000,000 as its share of the project, marking the first time the Hospital has ever received any municipal money for building purposes.

As always, the Sisters, too, are taking a substantial part in providing funds for expansion. They are prepared to borrow \$1,000,000 to help complete the new wing. This, with interest, they hope to pay back over a period of ten years or more.

This leaves \$2,400,000 still needed. To obtain it, the Sisters are conducting a public appeal for funds. It is a most reasonable request. They are asking those whose lives and well-being the Hospital protects to share in the cost of strengthening that protection. And they are asking for the very first time, after 70 years of outstanding service . . . *a lifetime of saving lives.*

HAMILTON HAS A STAKE IN ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL!

It is scarcely necessary to point out that the people of Hamilton derive very special advantages from an institution such as St. Joseph's Hospital. It has been conservatively estimated that an expenditure of no

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less than \$14,000,000 would be needed if the community were obliged to replace St. Joseph's Hospital as it stands at the present moment!

This Hospital is a tremendous public asset, and it has been provided for the people of Hamilton through the past and continuing efforts of the Sisters of St. Joseph, a private charitable organization. Now the Sisters are asking for help, and they do so only because it is quite clear that the public obligations of the Hospital demand an expansion, the cost of which they cannot meet entirely themselves.

St. Joseph's Hospital is an essential, dynamic part of the Hamilton community. It cannot remain static. As Hamilton grows, the Hospital must grow. It must meet the increasingly urgent demand for new bed space and technical facilities for both in-patient and out-patient services.

Hamilton's stake in St. Joseph's Hospital cannot be emphasized too strongly. Through diligence and devotion, the Sisters of St. Joseph have built not merely a fine, general hospital, but what is already the nucleus of a great public Medical Centre. Their effort cannot be measured in an exclusively monetary way but as has already been said, the community could not duplicate today,

for less than \$14,000,000, what the Sisters have created during 70 years.

This, then, is Hamilton's real stake in St. Joseph's Hospital. It already has in St. Joseph's a splendid public hospital in which great personal effort over many years, and large sums of philanthropic money, have been invested, and from which the Hamilton public has drawn generous and continuing dividends.

THE INVESTMENT MUST BE PROTECTED

This investment must be reasonably protected in this present crisis of civic growth and new social welfare demands. Federal, Provincial and Civic government grants suitably recognize the essentially public character of the operation of St. Joseph's Hospital. Citizens, corporations and other groups in the Hamilton area are being asked to provide the \$2,400,000 needed to complete the \$8,450,000 project.

As the record shows, the public has great faith in the Sisters and their Hospital. The Sisters, in turn, have faith that the people they serve will come to the aid of the Hospital in *its* hour of great need.

— KINGSLEY BROWN

FIRST PUBLIC APPEAL FOR FUNDS

Objective: \$2,400,000

THE STORY OF ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL and the following summary facts about the appeal are being sent to you in advance of the intensive period of solicitation. It is hoped that this information will arouse your interest in the Hospital and its urgent need for more facilities. Similarly, it is hoped that you may be counted among the many friends of the Hospital who are making contributions to the \$2,400,000 appeal.

The campaign organization is gathering momentum, through the voluntary efforts of many of Hamilton's leading citizens. Some advance solicitations are now in progress, with the public phase scheduled for the last part of February and the early part of March, 1961.

Mr. V. W. Scully is serving as General Chairman of St. Joseph's Hospital Building Fund. Mr. Joseph M. Pigott and Mr. Hugh G. Hilton are Honorary Chairmen and Mr. Howard J. Lang is Honorary Treasurer. Campaign headquarters are located at Oakbank Residence, 301 James Street South, Hamilton, Ontario.

SUMMARY OF NEEDS

NEW EIGHT-STOREY WING:

to contain 400 patient beds,
expanded facilities for surgery,
X-ray, lab, out-patients, emergency,
physiotherapy, paediatrics and
other supporting services \$7,600,000

FURNISHINGS AND EQUIPMENT 850,000

TOTAL COST: \$8,450,000

SHARING THE COSTS

Anticipated statutory grants from
Federal and Provincial Governments \$3,050,000

City of Hamilton grant 2,000,000

Gift from Sisters of St. Joseph 1,000,000*

Total objective of St. Joseph's Hospital

Building Fund \$2,400,000

**The sisters are prepared to borrow \$1,000,000
to help complete the building program.*

ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL BUILDING FUND

Honorary Patrons

THE RIGHT REV. W. E. BAGNALL, D.D.
Lord Bishop of Niagara

THE HON. ELLEN L. FAIRCLOUGH
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration

DR. G. P. GILMOUR
President and Vice-Chancellor of McMaster University

MRS. WILLIAM HENDRIE

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MR. W. D. SARGENT
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THE HON. WILLIAM K. WARRENDER
Minister of Municipal Affairs

MR. WILLIAM A. WINGROVE
Warden of Wentworth County

General Chairman

V. W. SCULLY

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THOMAS F. RAHILLY, JR.

P. A. STANLEY TODD

GEORGE L. WILCOX

Hospital Staffs

CHARLES H. JAIMET, M.D.

G. ALAN LANE, M.D.

AMBROSE J. LISTON, M.D.

KENNETH MURRAY, M.D.

Personal Gifts

FRANK A. SHERMAN
chairman

C. HARRY BOOTHE
vice-chairman

EDWARD H. AMBROSE

PERCY W. HANKINSON

MRS. J. M. MCLEAN

MISS ROSA E. PARRY

JOHN F. SHEA

GORDON J. SULLIVAN, Q.C.

Labour Groups

JAMES STOWE
chairman

Public Information

THOMAS E. NICHOLS

KENNETH D. SOBLE
co-chairmen

Administration

NORMAN B. WEIR
chairman

Other Members of the Management Committee

M. BANKER BATES

NORMAN A. EAGER

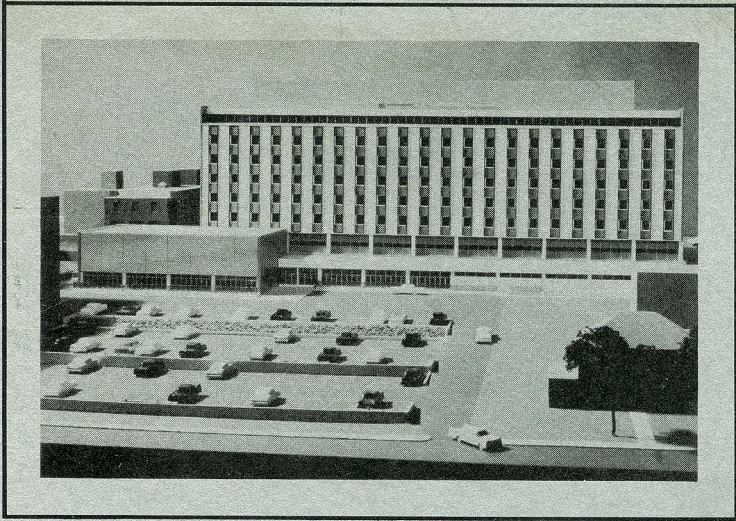
EUGENE B. EASTBURN

JOSEPH M. PIGOTT, JR.

REV. SISTER M. ST. PAUL

OMER G. VOSS

(All Committees in Process of Formation)



Model of New Wing for St. Joseph's Hospital, showing the front entrance as viewed from Charlton Avenue.

70 YEARS
OF SERVICE

A LIFETIME OF SAVING LIVES . . .