

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada

Finding Aid - Sister Mary Leo Kirwin sous-fonds (F01-SF13)

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Sister Mary Leo Kirwin sous-fonds

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Summary information

Repository:	Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada
Title:	Sister Mary Leo Kirwin sous-fonds
Reference code:	F01-SF13
Date:	1939-2015 (creation)
Physical description:	2.5 cm of textual records 13 photographs : b&w ; 13 x 11 cm or smaller 320 photographs : col. ; 21 x 10 cm or smaller 6 newspaper clippings ; 20 x 14 cm or smaller 2 relics 1 lapel pin 1 quilt
Language:	English
Dates of creation, revision and deletion:	July 2, 2020

Administrative history / Biographical sketch

Note

Sister Mary Leo Kirwin was born Mary Margaret Kirwin in Ingersoll, Ontario on January 7, 1922 to Leo Joseph Kirwin and Mae Henesey. Mary attended Sacred Heart School from 1936-1940 and Ingersoll Collegiate Institute from 1940-1942. She then completed her teacher training at London Normal School from 1941-1942. After earning her teaching certificate, she spent the summer of 1942 working in a munitions factory, but began teaching in September of that year. Her teaching career began at RCSS #2 in Clinton, Ontario. She then taught at Sacred Heart School in Ingersoll from 1944-1946, and later moved to St. Mary's School from 1946-1947. On July 2, 1947, Mary Kirwin entered the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph and received the habit. She took the name Sister Mary Leo on January 3, 1948, and made her first vows on January 3, 1950. She took her final vows on January 3, 1953.

Sr. Mary Leo Kirwin worked as a teacher from 1950-1953 at the Holy Rosary School in London, Ontario. From 1953-1957, she served at this school as the principal. She moved to Simcoe to be a teacher and principal at St. Mary's Catholic School from 1957-1961. During this time, Sr. Mary Leo also attended the University of Western Ontario and obtained her B.A. in 1958. From 1961-1965, she taught at St. Louis School, Riverside in Windsor. She remained in Windsor from 1965 to 1967, where she taught at F.J. Brennan Catholic High School. She then returned to London and became a teacher and head of the home economics department at Mount St. Joseph Academy from 1969-1983. While she was teaching in London, she graduated from the University of Toronto with an Honours Specialist in Home Economics in 1980. In 1983, Sr. Mary Leo was called to move to Edmonton to serve as the General Superior of St. Joseph's Convent and act as coordinator of Western Houses, a role in which she served until 1989. While living at

the Edmonton Regional House in 1987, Sister Mary Leo became involved with the People In Need Shelter Society during a housing crisis. Along with Sister Alice Caswell and Sister Olga Barilko, she worked with disabled people. She also worked with the poor alongside Sister Esther Lucier. Her involvement grew and eventually the Society named a house for homeless men and women after her (the Kirwin Lucier House). From 1989-1991, she took up a new role at Elizabeth Place, a home for needy women in Edmonton. She was also involved with the Elizabeth Fry Society where she worked with prison women doing handiwork and visiting. In 1991, she returned to London, where she served as the general treasurer at Mount St. Joseph Motherhouse until 1998. In addition, she was on the local leadership council. Although she retired in 1998, Sr. Mary Leo Kirwin still provided relief for Sr. Veronica Cooke at Elaine Lucas Place from 1999-2001. The Elaine Lucas Place in London is a 45 bed residence for the homeless on Little Simcoe Street with which Sr. Mary Leo Kirwin was affiliated.

Sr. Mary Leo was involved in many committees throughout her life, including the Elizabeth Fry Society in Edmonton, L.I.F.T. Housing in London, and the Congregational bursary, donations, and strategic planning committees. She was also a community representative on the Red Cross Board.

One of her lasting contributions was her work with a low-income housing organization in Edmonton, the Edmonton Inner City Housing Society. The society opened its first project, a five-bedroom house in the McCauley neighbourhood and 30 years later, the year Sr. Mary Leo died, the same Edmonton Inner City Housing Society had grown to the point where it owned and managed more than 20 housing developments. These houses provided shelter for individuals and families, and supported 500 people in 300 housing units in inner city neighbourhoods.

Sr. Mary Leo also, as a result of visiting at Edmonton Women's Prison, saw the need for post-incarceration housing for women. The Congregation bought a house, known as Elizabeth House, with a Sister serving as housemother. Later, they purchased another house called Tess's House, with Sister Theresa Carmel Slavik serving as housemother for at risk young adults.

The Kirwin-Lucier House, which opened in 1993 in Edmonton, is a housing project of the Edmonton People in Need Shelter Society and provides a home for people with chronic mental disorders or substance abuse. It was named after Sisters Mary Leo Kirwin and Esther Lucier for their contributions to the society and its clients.

Sister Mary Leo was an expert at needlework, sewing of all kinds, quilting, upholstery, caning, and gardening. In 1976, her students at Mount St. Joseph Academy made an Olympic quilt which was presented to Prime Minister Trudeau. She continued making at least two quilts each year with a friend from the low cost housing development in London, until her death.

Sr. Mary Leo died November 26, 2015 in London, Ontario and is buried in St. Peter's Cemetery in London, Ontario.

Scope and content

The sous-fonds contains photographs of Sr. Mary Leo Kirwin's Congregational and family life, as well as pamphlets and memorabilia from the reunions she attended for her teacher training class, personal prayer books, religious artifacts, a photo directory from the Diocese of London, correspondence, a quilt she made by hand, and a Red Cross pin she earned for her service.

Notes

Title notes

- **Source of title proper:** Titled based on the creator of the sous-fonds.

Immediate source of acquisition

The records were transferred by the Congregational Leadership to the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada Archives – London site.

Location of originals

The records are stored off-site in London, Ontario.

Restrictions on access

These records are restricted to public access until 30 years after the death of Sister Mary Leo Kirwin in the case of files containing any sensitive information.

The Archives reserves the right to restrict access to the collection depending on the condition of the archival material, the amount of material requested, and the purpose of the research. The use of certain materials may also be restricted for reasons of privacy or sensitivity, or under a donor agreement. Access restrictions will be applied equally to all researchers and reviewed periodically. No researcher will be given access to any materials that contain a personal information bank such as donor agreements or personnel records, or to other proprietary information such as appraisals, insurance valuations, or condition reports.

Conditions governing use

Permission to study archival records does not extend to publication or display rights. The researcher must request this permission in writing from the Archives.

Finding aids

There is a series and file list.

Accruals

No further accruals are expected.

Note [Sources]

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada Archives. Dictionary of Biography of Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada.

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada Archives. F01-S019-07-01 CSJ Canada-Edmonton People in Need Shelter Society-The Edmonton People in Need Shelter Society, 1988-1999 [2013-109].

Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada Archives. F01-S019-02 CSJ Canada-Annals, Edmonton AB-Correspondence- Correspondence [includes Boyle McCauley Centre, Crossroads and Kirwin-Lucier House].

Other notes

- **Publication status:** published

- **Level of detail:** Partial
 - **Status description:** Revised
-

Access points

- Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada (London, Ont.)
 - Kirwin, Mary Leo, 1922-2015 (subject)
 - Multiple media (documentary form)
 - Photographs (documentary form)
 - Religion and religious people (subject)
 - Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada (London, Ont.) (subject)
 - London (place)
-

Collection holdings

Series: F01-SF13--001 - Teacher Training

Title: Teacher Training

Reference code: F01-SF13--001

Date: 1992, 2002 (date of creation)

Scope and content: This series contains a nametag used by Sister Mary Leo Kirwin at the London Normal School Reunion, a program for the London Normal School 2002 reunion, a photograph of her and her fellow reunion attendees, a compilation of poetry recited at the reunion, and the 1992 directory of graduates from the Class of 1942.

Physical description: 1 photograph: col. ; 15 x 10 cm
0.5 cm of textual records

Publication status:

published

Access points:

- Multiple media (documentary form)
-

File: F01-SF13--001--01 - London Normal School Reunions

Title: London Normal School Reunions

Reference code: F01-SF13--001--01

Publication status:

published

Series: F01-SF13--002 - Religious Life

Title: Religious Life

Reference code: F01-SF13--002

Date: 1939-[200-] (date of creation)

Scope and content: This series contains records related to the various parishes and dioceses in which Sr. Mary Leo Kirwin worked. It also includes a prayer book titled "The Holy Ghost Prayer Book" and a prayer book titled "The Following of Christ." There are two relics given to Sr. Mary Leo. The relics are of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and Pope Leo I. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton spent her life in service to people and established the first free Catholic School in America. Pope Leo I, also known as Pope Leo the Great, was the namesake of Sister Mary Leo. Pope Leo I was known for his courage, morality and protection of the faith. It is also interesting that her religious name, Leo, is that of her father and brother.

Physical description: 1 photograph : col. ; 15 x 10 cm

1 cm of textual records.

2 relics

Publication status:

published

Access points:

- Multiple media (documentary form)
-

File: F01-SF13--002--01 - Sacred Heart Parish Ingersoll

Title: Sacred Heart Parish Ingersoll

Reference code: F01-SF13--002--01

Publication status:

published

File: F01-SF13--002--02 - Diocese of London Jubilee Photo Directory

Title: Diocese of London Jubilee Photo Directory

Reference code: F01-SF13--002--02

Publication status:

published

File: F01-SF13--002--03 - Prayer Books

Title: Prayer Books

Reference code: F01-SF13--002--03

Publication status:

published

File: F01-SF13--002--04 - Relics

Title: Relics

Reference code: F01-SF13--002--04

Publication status:

published

Series: F01-SF13--003 - Outreach

Title: Outreach

Reference code: F01-SF13--003

Date: 1961, [between 19-? and 2015] (date of creation)

Scope and content: This series contains memorabilia from Sister Mary Leo's life of volunteerism, both with the Red Cross and with underprivileged women.

Physical description: 1 quilt ; 223 x 175 x 1 cm
1 lapel pin : 3 cm in diameter

Publication status:

published

Access points:

- Object (documentary form)
-

Subseries: F01-SF13--003--01 - Red Cross

Title: Red Cross

Reference code: F01-SF13--003--01

Date: 1961 (date of creation)

Scope and content: This sub-series contains memorabilia from Sister Mary Leo's service to the Red Cross Society. Specifically, there is a Red Cross pin given to Sr. Mary Leo in recognition of her volunteer work. She was an active community representative on the Red Cross Board.

Physical description: 1 lapel pin : metal, red and white enamel, rectangle with dangling circle ; 3 cm and 3 cm in diam.

Publication status:

published

Access points:

- Object (documentary form)
-

File: F01-SF13--003--01--01 - Red Cross pin

Title: Red Cross pin

Reference code: F01-SF13--003--01--01

Publication status:

published

Subseries: F01-SF13--003--02 - Crafting

Title: Crafting

Reference code: F01-SF13--003--02

Date: [between 19-? and 2015] (date of creation)

Scope and content: This sub-series contains one of the many handmade quilts that Sr. Mary Leo Kirwin created during her life. She often quilted with students and the needy, and this quilt was created with one of the women living at Elaine Lucas Place, a low income housing complex. The quilt is a hand stitched cotton quilt that is a variation of the wedding ring pattern with a scalloped edge.

Physical description: 1 quilt : cotton ; 223 x 115 x 1 cm

Publication status:

published

Access points:

- Object (documentary form)
-

File: F01-SF13--003--02--01 - Quilt

Title: Quilt

Reference code: F01-SF13--003--02--01

Publication status:

published

Series: F01-SF13--004 - Donations

Title: Donations

Reference code: F01-SF13--004

Date: 2004, 2013 (date of creation)

Scope and content: This series contains a letter to Dr. Robert Stevenson, which was forwarded to Sr. Mary Leo Kirwin from Rev. W.T McGrattan of St. Peter's Seminary in appreciation of Dr. Stevenson's financial contribution to the Kirwin-Henesy seminary bursary fund. In addition, there are financial records listing donors and their financial contributions, as well an invitation to advertise to potential donors. There are also standing (including Sr. Mary Leo's) donations to the St. Peter's Seminary Bursary established by Mrs. Mae Kirwin in 1977.

Physical description: 0.5 cm of textual records

Publication status:

published

Access points:

- Textual record (documentary form)
-

File: F01-SF13--004--01 - Kirwin Henesy Bursary St. Peter's Seminary

Title: Kirwin Henesy Bursary St. Peter's Seminary

Reference code: F01-SF13--004--01

Publication status:

published

Series: F01-SF13--005 - Photographs

Title: Photographs

Reference code: F01-SF13--005

Date: [1940]-2008 (date of creation)

Scope and content: This series contains photographs documenting the religious and family life of Sr. Mary Leo Kirwin, hand written notes, newspaper clippings of parish members and friends, and the majority of the photos included hand written labels. Of particular note is a colour photograph depicting

the two-story, 15-bedroom home named after Sr. Mary Leo Kirwin and Sr. Esther Lucier for their work with people in need in Edmonton, Alberta.

Physical description: 13 photographs : b&w ; 13 x 11 cm or smaller
318 photographs : col. ; 21 x 10 cm or smaller
0.5 cm of textual records.
6 newspaper clippings ; 13 x 11 or smaller

Arrangement: The photographs were rehoused and arranged into two files Family Life and Congregational Life. The sequence of photographs in the original albums was maintained.

Publication status:

published

Access points:

- Multiple media (documentary form)
-

File: F01-SF13--005--01 - Congregational Life

Title: Congregational Life

Reference code: F01-SF13--005--01

Publication status:

published

File: F01-SF13--005--02 - Family Life

Title: Family Life

Reference code: F01-SF13--005--02

Publication status:

published
