

**Correspondence of Fathers Joseph Marcoux and Aime Giguere with the Little
Franciscans of Mary
MCC-00435**

Cubic Feet: .75 cubic ft

Prepared by
Anne Chamberland, December 2017
Acadian Archives / Archives acadiennes
University of Maine at Fort Kent
Fort Kent, Maine

Correspondence of Fathers Joseph Marcoux and Aime Giguere with the Little Franciscans of Mary (MCC-00435)

Shelf List Number: UM-435

Collection Overview

Creators

Little Franciscans of Mary, Baie St-Paul, P.Q.

Dates

1906-1949

Extent

3 Folders (.75 cubic feet)

Provenance

Material was acquired in October 2017 from Centre d'archives regional de Charlevoix through the Little Franciscans of Mary and at the request of the Acadian Archives.

Languages

French

English

Conservation Notes

None

Conditions Governing Access and Use

Restrictions

Access: No restrictions

Physical: No restrictions

Technical: No restrictions

Rights Statement

Copyright has not been assigned to the Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes. All requests for permission to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted in writing to the Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes.

Recommended Citation

Correspondence of Fathers Joseph Marcoux and Aime Giguere with the Little Franciscans of Mary, MCC-00435, Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes, University of Maine at Fort Kent.

Location of Originals

Centre d'archives régional de Charlevoix

Collection Description

Historical and Biographical Information

The **Little Franciscans of Mary** (P.F.M.) is a catholic congregation founded by 11 women in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1889. Their mission was orientated toward education and charitable works that brought them to Canada where they found a wise advisor in Father Ambroise-Martial Fafard, pastor at Baie-Saint-Paul, who guided them to the realization of their mission. On August 12, 1892, with the approval of the Bishop of Chicoutimi, they officially became "Les Petites Franciscaines de Marie". Father Fafard was placing no limits on the apostolate of the Little Franciscans of Mary foreseeing their future in charitable works such as primary and secondary education, boarding schools, nurseries, hospitals, and asylums, all this undertaking in conformity with the society's charter.

On June 23, 1898, Sister Marie-Anne-deJesus. PFM, of Baie St-Paul received a letter from Father Joseph Marcoux, pastor of Saint Joseph's Church in Wallagrass, Maine, pursuing the services of a few Sisters for his parish. Father Marcouz had just finished building his convent, a frame building 60 x 40 feet, three stories high with a basement. The convent would be boarding and day school for the children of Wallagrass. Five Sisters left for Wallagrass to teach in a very uncomfortable and rudimentary setting.

Another invitation was made to the Sisters in 1906 by Father Marcoux who needed nurses for a little general hospital he had built at Eagle Lake. In January 1907, four sisters began their services of mercy at the Eagle Lake hospital (Northern Maine General Hospital, 1906-1966), which would be under the care of the Franciscan Sisters. That same year, Father Arthur Decray from the Saint Louis Parish of Fort Kent, went directly to Baie Saint-Paul asking for teaching Sisters for the children of Fort Kent. Four Sisters were sent to Fort Kent and started classes in September in the basement of Father Decray's church.

In late October of 1916, St. Mary's Convent School in Eagle Lake opened after nearly 6 years of haggling over financial and administrative matters among Father Marcoux, Bishop Louis Walsh, and the Franciscan sisters.¹

The Sisters continued to respond to the needs of the communities in the St. John Valley by establishing the People's Benevolent Hospital in Fort Kent in 1952 at the request of Father Aime Giguere.

Father Joseph Marcoux, born in Ste-Brigide-d'Iberville on December 9, 1850, completed his studies in Marierville where he was ordained a priest on October 10, 1874 by Bishop C. Larocque. After serving as curate in Bedford, Saint-Ignace-de-Stanbridge, Farnham and Saint-Pie-de-Bagot, and as a missionary in Manitoba, he became pastor in Wallagrass, Maine in 1890. There he built the church, rectory, and convent. He became pastor of Eagle Lake, Maine in 1907 where he built a hospital and convent. Father Marcoux died in 1918.

Marie Bideau, Mother Marie-Anne-de-Jésus, one of the 11 foundresses and the first Superior General of the Little Franciscans of Mary. Marie Bideau was born on October 9, 1865 in Sorel, Lower Canada, the daughter of Pierre and Catherine Latraverse Bideault. After attending the local elementary school in her village, she obtained work as a dressmaker. Around 187 her

¹ *Eagle Lake: The History of a Lumbering Town in Aroostook County, Maine.*

family emigrated to Manchaug, Massachusetts, where there was a substantial Franco-American community. Bibeau joined the fledgling community and was received as a postulant on October 7, 189. On November 24, she donned the habit and was given the name Marie-Anne-de-Jésus. In 1890 she became assistant to Sister Marie-Joseph, and put her dressmaking skills to use both in the orphanage and in making religious habits for the new novices. Much of Bibeau's early work and the founding of the congregation took place in Worcester, Massachusetts and her contributions to the Canadian religious fabric took place largely at Baie-Saint-Paul, Quebec, which is also the site of the motherhouse.² She died at Baie-Saint-Paul on April 30, 1924.

Lumina Bolduc, Mother Marie-Dominique born January 11, 1870 in Saint-Lambert-de-Levis was the daughter of Henri Bolduc and Eulalie Marcoux. She was given the name Marie-Josephine Lumina. She was the last of the Mother Foundresses when she entered the Father's House on August 14, 1952. Mother Marie-Dominique was Superior in one of the other convents of the Congregation.³

Father Aime Giguere arrived in St. Louis Parish in 1834 and remained until 1951. Father Giguere organized an effort to establish a hospital in Fort Kent. He had been committed to improving the quality of care available in the County. After his arrival in the St. John Valley, he began working to meet the pressing health care needs of the people around him. His plans for a hospital to be located in Fort Kent began modestly. He hoped to build a twenty bed maternity hospital at the corner of Main and Pleasant Streets. The plans grew, however, and by the time of ground breaking on September 11, 1950, there was to be a modern 66 bed acute care hospital. On September 21, 1952, Peoples Benevolent Hospital opened its doors. For the next twenty-three years the hospital was run by Les Petites Franscican de Marie, a Catholic order of nuns with special skills in hospital management. Then, in 1975, Peoples Benevolent Hospital became a public community hospital and changed its name to Northern Maine Medical Center. For over forty years, Northern Maine Medical Center has provided high quality medical care to the citizens of the St. John Valley. NMMC, through a tradition of community outreach and excellence in health care, has fulfilled Monsignor Giguere's commitment. With his dreams as a guide, the hospital has continued to expand its programs and services over the years. Local fund drives raised a total of \$114,000.00 for the hospital. A movie theater was also established in the basement of the convent that raised \$60,000.00 for the project. The remaining funds needed for the hospital came from a federal grant.

Bishop Louis Sebstin Walsh was born in Salem, Massachusetts to Patrick and Honora (nee Foley) Walsh. He attended Holy Cross College in Worcester for one year before entering the Grand Seminary of Montreal in Quebec, Canada. He furthered his studies in canon law and theology in Rome. He was ordained to the priesthood by Cardinal Raffaele Monaco La Valletta on December 23, 1882. Walsh served as assistant pastor at St. Joseph's Church in Boston's West End. In 1884 he became professor of church history, canon law, and liturgy at St. John's Seminary in Brighton. He was named the first supervisor of Catholic schools for the Archdiocese of Boston in 1887. He was also one of the founders of the New England Catholic Historical Society and the Catholic Educational Association.

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Fransiscans_of_Mary

³ *By this sign you will live: History of the Congregation of the Little Franciscans of Mary 1889-1995.*

On August 3, 1906, Walsh was appointed the fourth Bishop of Portland, Maine by Pope Pius X. During his tenure, he established several new parishes and schools, and renovated the cathedral. He supported the National Catholic Welfare Conference and founded the Maine Catholic Historical Magazine.

Walsh's last years saw the rise of the Ku Klux Klan as a political force in Maine, and particularly in Portland. The Diocese's successful and expanding parochial school system became a Klan rallying point. Walsh personally led the fight against the Barwise Bill, a Klan-supported measure that would have prevented the Catholic Church from receiving state funds for any purpose. After returning from a canonical visit to Rome and France in February 1924, Walsh was left exhausted and died two months later, aged 66.⁴

Northern Maine General: The hospital history began in 1904. Father Marcoux informed Bishop O'Connell of his intention to build a hospital. Over the whole of 1904 and winter of 1905, it appears the details of the initial plans were satisfactory to the bishop. Final approval was given for the first hospital north of Bangor. Construction began in 1905.

Father Marcoux went to Baie St. Paul to see whether the Little Franciscans of Mary would administer the hospital. (These sisters were then operating the academy in Wallagrass.) In January of 1906, four sisters arrived to take charge of the 'finished hospital' though it was still incomplete and devoid of furnishings. They had to appeal to the townspeople for donations. The building was 40 feet by 60 feet, three stories high plus a basement.

The early years of the hospital were particularly difficult. While struggling to pay off the debt, the sisters were barely able to maintain the hospital. The inability of patients to pay for services, the lack of medical supplies and a qualified resident surgeon, made it difficult for the hospital's potential to be realized. With the arrival of Dr. William V. Kirk and his reputation as a surgeon, people came from all parts of Aroostook County to be treated by him. From that time the hospital was rarely empty.

Peoples Benevolent Hospital: Northern Maine Medical Center is a modern, fully accredited, 49 bed acute care facility offering complete obstetric, surgical, pediatric, and general medical services. Although currently known as Northern Maine Medical Center, the hospital was formerly called Peoples Benevolent Hospital. The first section was opened in 1952 with an addition in 1971. The dedicated Catholic Order of Sisters, "*Les Petites Franciscaines de Marie*," managed the hospital from its inception in 1952 to 1975 when it became a public community hospital. Doctors, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners are affiliated with the hospital. This professional pool of providers contributes to the broad number of specialty clinics which are offered on a scheduled basis which includes the full-time staff of providers.⁵

Scope and Content

This collection consists of copies of handwritten and typescript letters between Father Joseph Marcoux, Pastor of Wallagrass and Eagle Lake, the Little Franciscans of Mary of Baie-Saint-Paul, Bishop Louis S. Walsh of the Diocese of Portland, and Father Aime Giguere of

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Sebastian_Walsh

⁵ <http://www.nmmc.org/about-us/>

Fort Kent. The correspondence, starting in 1906 through 1949, requested the Little Franciscans of Mary to administer and staff Father Marcoux's hospital (Northern Maine General Hospital) and the Convent School (St. Mary's Convent) in Eagle Lake and Father Aime Giguere's hospital in Fort Kent, Maine.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged into three folders, each of which contains correspondence from one person. The materials in each folder are arranged chronologically.

Separated Materials (If Applicable)

Not applicable

Subject Headings

Boarding schools
Church and education
Health facilities--Maine--Eagle Lake
Hospitals--Fort Kent--Maine
Hospitals--Maine--Eagle Lake
Letters (correspondence)
Northern Maine General Hospital (Eagle Lake, Maine)
Saint Mary's Convent (Eagle Lake, Maine)
Wallagrass (Me.)--History

Related Materials

Books:

By this sign you will leave: History of the Congregation of the Little Franciscans of Mary, 1889-1995. Acadian Stacks BX4392 .G3713 1964.

The Foundresses: The Little Franciscans of Mary. Acadian Stacks BX4392 .L57 1987

The Little Franciscans of Mary Commemorating their ministry to a variety of calls and needs in Northern Maine. Acadian Stacks BX1418 .S134 L55 1999

Little Franciscan Sisters of Mary 60th anniversary 1906-1966. Acadian Stacks BX1418 .S134 L58 1966

Les Petite Franciscans de Marie by Sylvain Desmeules. Acadian Stacks BX4392 .D47 P47 2012.

Ready Reference:

14.2.6 Daigle, F. (n.d.). Little Franciscans of Mary. Fawi, 3(2), 1-15. Retrieved March 31, 2014, from <http://www.fawi.net/exine/vol3no2/Daigle.html>

Folder	Collection Inventory Description	Date(s)
---------------	---	----------------

- Folder 1: Copies of 4 handwritten letters plus 1 typescript contract addressed to Reverend Mother Marie Anne de Jesus from Father Joseph Marcoux in regard to the Eagle Lake Hospital. 1906, 1907, 1910, 1912
- Folder 2: 2 typescript letters to Reverend Joseph Marcoux by Bishop Walsh of Portland and 18 handwritten and typescript letters to “Tres Reverende Mere Marie-Dominique, Sup. Gen.” from Father Joseph Marcoux in regard to the Convent School of Eagle Lake. 1910-1918
- Folder 3: 10 typescript letters between Mere Marie du Sauveur, PFM and cure Aime Giguere of Fort Kent regarding the People’s Benevolent Hospital of Fort Kent. 1948-1949