

**A CENTURY OF ANGLICAN WOMEN RELIGIOUS
IN NOVA SCOTIA, 1891-1991**

by

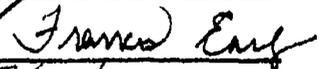
Heidi MacDonald (c) 1992

Presented to Dr. J. G. Reid in partial fulfilment of the
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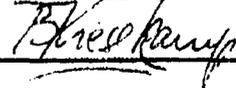
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	4
Preface	5
Introduction	7
Chapter 1: The Sisters of Saint Margaret and the Church Hospital, 1890-1893	31
Chapter 2: The Sisters of Saint John the Divine and All Saints' Springhill Hospital, 1936-1949	66
Chapter 3: The Society of Our Lady, Saint Mary, Digby, 1979- Present	105
Conclusion	133
Tables	140
Selected Bibliography	142

ABSTRACT

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Three Anglican women's religious orders existed in Nova Scotia in the last century. The Sisters of Saint Margaret managed the Church Hospital from 1891 to 1893, the Sisters of Saint John the Divine operated All Saints' Springhill Hospital from 1936 to 1949, and the members of The Society of Our Lady, Saint Mary, have acted as a religious presence in Digby County since 1979. This study considers the development of women's religious orders since the mid nineteenth century, with emphasis on their progression in the Anglican Church. It avoids the usual stereotypes of the lives of women religious and presents a realistic analysis of their work in three areas of Nova Scotia. Their failure to date to become permanently established is blamed on anti-Catholic sentiment as well as a lack of support from members of the diocese.

PREFACE

The following three chapters will consider a century of Anglican Women Religious in Nova Scotia, from 1891 to 1991. As there are no orders that have survived the entire time period under study, three unrelated congregations will be studied to achieve a longer chronological period. This broader spectrum should examine adequately uncloistered Anglican women's orders in Nova Scotia. Each order will be examined within the context of the community, town, or city in which they served. The first chapter will consider the work of the Sisters of Saint Margaret and the Church Hospital in Halifax from 1891 to 1893: why they were asked to come, their clientele, and the reason they left after only two years. The second chapter will cover the period 1936 to 1949 and the work of the Sisters of Saint John the Divine in Springhill's Church Hospital. It is a unique situation in that the hospital was founded and run by the Anglican Diocese of Nova Scotia more than forty years before the Sisters arrived. The Springhill chapter will concentrate on the interaction and impact of the Sisters with

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I am indebted to many people for their assistance in completing this project. In the early stages Dr. Frances Early, Father David Garrett, and Ms. Rosemary Barbour helped peak my interest in the subject, define the thesis, and determine the breadth of material. Throughout the research stage, each order to which a chapter is devoted, was generous of their time and resources. I am especially appreciative of those who granted interviews, a list of whom is found on page 143.

The skill and patience of the staff at both the Public Archives of Nova Scotia and the Anglican Diocesan Archives of Nova Scotia were integral to the completion of this thesis. At St. Mary's University, Dr. Colin Howell and Dr. Burkhard Kieseckamp were very supportive of my work. Most importantly, Dr. John Reid, my thesis advisor, provided fine academic criticism, as well as assurance and encouragement. Finally, I would like to thank my parents and sisters, including Anne-Marie, for their understanding support.

the town, as well as with their involvement in church politics. The final chapter will examine a society of nuns in Digby, which has been in existence since 1979. Because the society continues to be in operation, much of the information for this chapter will be based on oral interviews that reflect the past as well as proposed future of Anglican Sisterhoods in an age when many orders have not received postulants for more than a decade as well as when the ordination of women has been possible since 1979.

The role of women in society, the role of the church in society, and the role of women in the church will be considered as context throughout. The approach will be more scholarly and historical than religious. Congregations often prefer to write their own histories from within the convent. Such congregational accounts tend to concentrate on the spiritual lives of the women and fail to address interactions and correlations with society. Neither the histories produced within nor outside the orders stand well on their own. However, what is most lacking in Nova Scotia, is scholarly historical analysis that may be added to the growing sources on women's history.

INTRODUCTION

Women Religious generally have been excluded from conventional history because their ways of life were thought to offer little that would warrant examination. Traditionally, the only accounts of Women Religious surfaced periodically from the pens of community archivist-historians. Celebratory in nature, these conventional histories often marked a special occasion such as a centennial. The approach was inevitably chronological and unrevealing, and nuns' individual accomplishments or characteristics were downplayed in an attempt to emphasize the humble, cohesive work of the community. Usually, the only specific women mentioned were Mother Superiors, who were described predominately in regard to their spiritual lives within the community. Such biographies were full of redundant adjectives such as 'pious, prayerful, caring, and compassionate'.¹

¹Examples of this genre include Sister Maura, The Sisters of Charity, Halifax. (Toronto: Ryerson P, 1956) and Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine 1884-1984 (Toronto: St. John's Convent, 1984).

The last decade has witnessed the emergence of a fresh historiography of Women Religious. Although far from prolific, these new studies have an approach that is in sharp contrast to the traditional variety. The angle through which religious communities are being examined ranges from socio-economic to anthropological. The conclusions are surprising and often emotionally upsetting for those people who maintain the belief that the Religious Life is unshakeable.

Long thought to be the pious pillars of society, far removed from earthly concerns, nuns are being analyzed now for their motivation to join a community and for their achievement inside the community. Their call to a vocation is no longer a topic believed to be inexplicable, but rather is portrayed as a valuable societal indicator. Acknowledging this, authors are probing ardently to uncover the non-spiritual motivations that led women to become nuns. Explaining what nineteenth-century women may have gained by becoming nuns, the late feminist historian Marta Danylewycz stated that "under the aegis of a vocation, women could reject marriage, pursue life long careers, and be part of a community that enjoyed its ability to create its own sense of rank, status, and division of labour."² This view maintains that many women made a conscious, deliberate decision to enter a religious order rather than accepting the traditional role of motherhood.

Anthropologist Suzanne Campbell-Jones is no less forthright in

²Marta Danylewycz, Taking the Veil (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987) 106.

her scrutiny of the entrance of women to the religious life. She questions nuns' motives, writing:

To what extent is her action altruistic and to what extent is she forced into it. The rules and values of the religious life are more demanding than those of society at large. To what extent is it won by a series of indoctrinatory and alienating procedures.³

Campbell-Jones also maintains that a woman's entrance into convent life was not always spiritually motivated. Outside influences such as the traditional expectation that at least one female from each Roman Catholic family would become a sister undoubtedly affected young women considering a religious vocation. Campbell-Jones stresses that whatever it was that encouraged young women of the nineteenth century to 'sacrifice themselves' by joining convents deserves to be studied.

As more than ninety percent of women married in the nineteenth century, marriage was clearly the most socially acceptable way of life. Economically, marriage was usually necessary for women because it was so difficult for single women to make a living. Women's professional employment, including nursing, barely paid enough to cover room and board. Employment where men and women performed equal duties, domestically, industrially, or commercially, awarded women approximately half of what was paid to men. It was understood that a woman's pay would only supplement her husband's pay and that she would not have to support herself on it. In the unlikely occasion that a woman had a career, it was

³Suzanne Campbell-Jones, In Habit (London: Faber and Faber, 1979) 69.

expected to come second to her marriage. Nancy Cott, in The Bonds of Womanhood, summarized the plight of women in the nineteenth century, writing that "...there was for most women, no appealing alternative to marriage in its economic, sexual, and social aspects."⁴

For Marta Danylewycz, however, women did have an alternative to marriage. In fact, she titled her book, Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Spinsterhood. The attraction of convent life in an age when there was little freedom for women, was potentially varied and appealing.⁵ 'Nonspiritual' incentives included a chance to gain an education, practise a career, be economically independent of parents, carry on the tradition of some Catholic families to have at least one daughter join a convent, and lastly, to join a relative or friend already in a convent.

The reasons some women wished to avoid marriage in the nineteenth century are quite obvious. Inadequate birth control meant that many women were pregnant or nursing most of their childbearing years; they were restricted to stay near the home unless they could afford a maid or wet nurse. Combined with this, from the mid to late nineteenth century, a reasonable degree of

⁴Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood (Yale U P) 193.

⁵Danylewycz wrote about two orders in Quebec, The Sisters of Misericorde and the Congregation of Notre Dame. Although both of these are Roman Catholic Orders, many of Danylewycz's comments are applicable to convent life in general. In the section on the attraction of women to convent life, we may safely assume that Anglican women saw the same advantages as Roman Catholic women, although they entered in smaller numbers.

self-sufficiency was expected in a household. Thus life was inevitably tiring -especially for rural women- as it included many monotonous chores. For lower and middle class women in particular, staying at home with children was a potentially depressing life of drudgery that women who became nuns may have been trying to avoid. For middle and upper class women. life was potentially boring, offering little educational or physical stimulation.

Many women were enticed to religious life for the intellectual haven the church, historically, has offered to nuns and monks. Nuns received an education for the purpose of the career chosen for them, usually either teaching or nursing.⁶ It was assumed that Religious were more dedicated to their studies than members of secular society because they had few outside, personal worries; no family was dependent on them and they were provided with food and shelter.

Linked to the basic desire for an education, many women may have become nuns so they could pursue a career. In this, they could make a contribution to society and put into use their personal abilities which may have included an aptitude for education or health care. We must keep in mind how difficult it was to obtain and maintain a career regardless of whether a woman was married or single. A member of a religious congregation was

⁶It seems that the hierarchy within the particular religious congregation (ie the Reverend Mother and perhaps a small committee) decided the education and careers for nuns although there was no dialogue with the recipient. Apparently, careers were chosen for the nuns on the basis of what was needed to maintain the self-sufficiency of the convent (dietitians, accountants, nurses etc.), and to fulfil the mission of their particular order.

exempt from such difficulty and instead was seen as a diligent, intelligent worker who could provide an example for other employees to follow. Alexander Penrose Forbes, a nineteenth century supporter of sisterhoods, summarized this view:

The village schoolmistress, matrons of institutions, nurses, would be of a wholly different order, if they had the pattern of a 'Sister of Mercy' performing the same offices.... Those who are not drawn towards it, are yet drawn upwards, by the example of such as, from among themselves, are led to higher aims.⁷

Along with employers being happy with nuns' performances, nuns were probably unconcerned about the level of wage they received. Economically, a nun could afford to earn low wages because the shared income of her community would ensure food and shelter almost regardless of personal income.

Another reason women joined convents was through their family's influence. It had become a tradition by the nineteenth century for Roman Catholic families to encourage at least one daughter to be a nun and one son to be a priest. The reason for this continues to be argued. However, it seems that adequate evidence is provided to suggest that these selected children were a form of sacrifice. Having a daughter or a son in religious life was thought to ensure a place in heaven for the mother and father. This cannot be explained more concisely than in the following poem written by the father of a nun.

⁷ Michael Hill, The Religious Order (London: Heineman Educational Books, 1973) p. 289, from William Alexander Forbes, A Plea for Sisterhoods (London: Joseph Masters, 1849) 15-16.

Sure my daughter has been vested
And my joy I cannot hide,
For I've watched her from the cradle
With a Father's honest pride.

Since to err is only human
There's a whole lot on the slate
That I'll have to make account for
When I reach the golden gate.

But then I'm not a worrying
About the deeds I've done,
I'll just whisper to St Peter:
'I'm the daddy of a nun'.⁸

Anglican families were not so accustomed to the idea of having at least one daughter join a convent, and in some cases women had to overcome much opposition before entering a religious order. However, as always in the Anglican Church, there was a great deal of diversity. Thus in the Anglo Catholic families which supported sisterhoods, daughters would have been encouraged to enter, and parents would have been influenced by the same ideology as Roman Catholic parents.⁹

Continuing with the notion of family, some nuns apparently joined convents to be with their aunts, sisters, or cousins. This seemed odd as, until recent years, they were rarely allowed to converse socially. Nevertheless, there must have been some comfort in seeing the relative healthy. Upon interviewing nuns of the twentieth century, it is common to find a nun having a sister in the same congregation although they may not be living in the same

⁸Campbell-Jones 75, taken from Marcelle Bernstein, Nuns.

⁹Hill 273.

place.¹⁰

Along with choosing to join a convent because one's relative was already a member, there were several other considerations a prospective postulant might have in mind. Danylewycz writes that young women strove to find the convent best suited to them.

Rather than abandoning themselves to God's will by rushing to the closest convent, they reasoned and calculated, determining which community best suited their particular social preferences and personal aspirations.¹¹

Young Anglican women did not have as many options in choosing convents. However, the incidence of Anglican women choosing to convert to Roman Catholicism in order to join a convent strongly suggests that they too were concerned about finding the most appropriate congregation.¹² Conversely, Suzanne Campbell-Jones notes that convents did not accept women whom they felt to be unsuited to either religious life, or their particular

¹⁰Relatives in the same convent was a noticeable trend to Danylewycz as she indicated in Taking the Veil p.111. I personally noticed this trend on an informal basis, while talking to several members of the Halifax Sisters of Charity who entered between 1925 and 1945. I have been unable to obtain statistics on this phenomenon in Anglican Sisterhoods except in the case when a Mother Superior is related to a former Mother Superior, and the instance is 'important enough' to warrant mention in a community history. This has happened with the Toronto Sisters of Saint John the Divine (Anglican).

¹¹Danylewycz, thesis, 156.

¹²Although it certainly has happened, there are no statistics available on the incidence of Anglican women converting to Roman Catholicism, and then joining convents. Perhaps the most famous instance of this is Elizabeth Seton, a former "fervent Episcopalian" (American 'Anglican') who became a Roman Catholic and founded the North American Sisters of Charity in 1812. For more detail see Annabelle M. Melville, Elizabeth Bayley Seton 1774-1821 (New York: Jove, 1985).

congregation. She notes that specific characteristics that congregations looked for included "...a well-developed sense of responsibility, self awareness, and knowledgement [sic] of her sexual needs."¹³ Anglican convents were especially concerned with the age of postulants. For example, since before the 1950s, the Sisters of Saint John the Divine preferred not to accept women under thirty or women who were not in a position to support themselves. This was in case they had not adequately experienced life or were expecting the convent to serve as a shelter from society. Convent administration realized that nuns did not enter religious life solely because of a religious calling, and that there were many other incentives that led women to profess.

Recent theories are shedding new light on the study of sisterhoods, an area into which historians, sociologists, and anthropologists have rarely delved. However, many of the conclusions are so different from what had previously been assumed, that it is often difficult to accept the findings in their entirety. The accusations that nuns entered for personal gain rather than fulfilling a spiritual motivation are too broad. The present generation of social historians are ignoring the significant number of nuns who must have entered for traditional reasons. Admittedly, qualitative analysis to explain the spiritual motivations of nuns is lacking; however, this may be due in large part to the difficulties involved in approaching such an intangible phenomenon. It is difficult to define, prove, or explain the

¹³Campbell-Jones 77, 74-77.

existence of a religious calling, especially to sceptical members of secular society. A vocation is in many ways as much a relationship as a career, which partly explains the complexity of its analysis. Nevertheless, because of the emotional nature of spirituality, scholars should neither ignore the study of nuns nor reduce it to one of statistics or generalizations. It is an area in which the human psyche is absolutely integral in making conclusions.

Along with poor qualitative analysis of women's vocations, another inaccuracy of the new historiography on Women Religious is that it is usually presented in a generic manner. There can be a great deal of variation between orders, just as there is between denominations of the same faith. Furthermore, the authors have studied Roman Catholic nuns; there have not been any recent studies specifically about Anglican nuns.

Although one might quickly note differences between Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism, it must be remembered that the 'strain' of Anglicans who tend to be supportive of nuns are from the Anglo Catholic tradition, which is in several ways quite similar to the Roman Catholic Church in its ritual and symbolism. This group accentuates its common ancestry with the Roman Church more than the Protestant and Reformed influences. Also referred to as the High Church, in the nineteenth century the members of this group interpreted the Bible in terms of the early Church, which led them to support sisterhoods. Anglo Catholics appreciated the exaltation of celibacy which was propounded by the early Catholic

Fathers and reemphasized in the seventeenth century by several writers with special reference to Saint Augustine and Saint Jerome.¹⁴ It was this same Anglo Catholic movement that encouraged the formation of Anglican Sisterhoods in the mid nineteenth century.

Certainly these Anglo Catholic sisterhoods were far fewer in number, and the sum of Anglican Sisters has historically been consistently much lower than Roman Catholic Nuns. However, consideration of Anglican nuns provides scope for qualitative analysis that may not be so readily available in larger Roman Catholic orders. Regardless of their significance in numbers, Anglican nuns should be studied simply because so few people are aware that they exist when in fact, nuns have been an influential segment of the Anglican Church.

The Anglo Catholics of the Victorian era were a very distressed lot.¹⁵ It was disturbing to them that the Church of England had become so Protestant. The outward and visible signs of spirituality were falling into deliberate disuse. Architecture, art, ritual, music, vestments, and frequent Holy Communion were criticized as being less important than simple faith, and, even unnecessary. The Anglo Catholics never disputed the importance of

¹⁴'Anglo Catholic' or High Church refers to the element of the Anglican Church that emphasizes catholicity. In the nineteenth century, the two other main divisions of Anglicans are Evangelicals, or Low Church, and The Broad Church or Centralists. The word 'catholic' is, simply, a synonym of 'universal'. For more information see Hill 141-42 and 150-51.

¹⁵Many would argue that they still are.

inner faith but saw outward signs as a means of reverence through which to express and attain their spirituality; these signs were a significant part of their faith. John Mason Neale, a strong supporter of sisterhoods, explained the importance of the linkage between outward and visible signs and the general state of religion:

A neglected or desecrated building was the result of a lack of religion. Irreverence to the Altar or Font arose from a lack of faith in the Sacraments. Protestantism and a lack of reverence to holy things were related to each other.¹⁶

Apparently, the determining factor in solidifying Neale's decision to attempt to reverse the irreverence occurred when a church warden proceeded to climb on to the altar to open a window at the same time that the priest was preparing the sacrament for consecration.¹⁷ This irreverent act came to symbolize the problem of the lack of piety, concentration, and discernment which had struck the Anglican Church.

To combat this irreverence and to preserve some of the symbolism in the Early Church, a group of Church of England priests initiated what came to be known as the Oxford Movement. Its purpose was to bring the Church back to its prayerful existence, "... to reemphasize the spiritual autonomy of the Church of England..."¹⁸, at a time when liberalism was so influential in

¹⁶Sister Catherine Louise, S.S.M., House of My Pilgrimage (Pennsylvania: Littlepage P, [1982]) 2.

¹⁷The consecration is the focal point of every Service of Holy Communion. This story is told in House of my Pilgrimage p.2.

¹⁸Hill 128.

English society. Their rhetoric was based on the earlier work of the Tractarians, a circle which advocated a return to the teachings and directions of the Book of Common Prayer.¹⁹ To achieve this goal, church services stressed a more symbolic and reflective attitude.

Another way to help the Church of England regain its contemplative aspect was to expand its ministry. In Victorian England, the Church had viewed bishops, priests, and deacons as the only people dedicated to and ordained in full time church work. Members of the Oxford Movement suggested that religious orders, which had a legitimate historical basis, would be appropriate to practise and interpret outward spirituality. Their devotion would strengthen the Anglo Catholic Church element. Furthermore, religious orders -and especially sisterhoods- could be socially responsible, thereby garnering widespread respect in secular, interdenominational England. The immediate thrust was to support women's orders.

For some time, many Anglicans had believed that a case could be made for having religious houses for young women who wished to dedicate at least a part of their life to the work of the Church.

¹⁹This contains the traditional, official order of service for various occasions and sacraments in the Church of England. Until the 1980s it continued to be used extensively and is still the only prayerbook used by many parishes in Nova Scotia. The goals and work of the Tractarians as well as people of the Oxford Movement (John Keble, John Henry Newman, Edward Pusey, John Mason Neale etc.) are examined in Geoffrey Rowell, The Vision Glorious: Themes and Personalities of the Catholic Revival in Anglicanism (New York: Oxford U P, 1983) one of the many publications that marked the 150th anniversary of the Oxford Movement.

This was not something new to religion, but rather new to the Church of England at that time. Anglo Catholics justified the idea of increased vocations in many ways, one of which was to note the historical tradition, as exemplified in the following passage:

Ever since the beginning of Christianity, there hath been two orders or ranks of people among good Christians. The one that feared and served God in the common offices and businesses of a secular worldly life. The other renouncing the common business and common enjoyments of life²⁰

The Oxford Movement, which began in 1833, spurred the establishment of religious orders in the Church of England. From the point of view of Victorian Anglo Catholics, the purpose of Anglican women religious would be twofold. First, they could be contemplative, leading solemn lives of intercession for the redemption of unfortunate souls. Secondly, they could live active lives of nursing and visiting the sick, helping to better the desperate state of health care in contemporary England.

At that time, cholera and tuberculosis were deadly diseases. In 1848-49, between fifty and seventy thousand people died from cholera in England and Wales, fourteen thousand of them in London, and in 1866 more than five thousand died within three weeks in England.²¹ Hospitals were poorly equipped to handle this demand,

²⁰William Law, A Serious Call to Devout Life, (S.P.C.K., 1910) 110. As in A.M. Allchin, The Silent Rebellion (London: SCMP, 1958) p. 35. There have been numerous books in the last few decades that explain women's historical role in the Church, including JoAnne McNamara's A New Song: Celibate Women in the First Three Christian Centuries (New York: Harrington P, 1985).

²¹Christopher Hibbert, The English: A Social History (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1988) 439.

and thus even seriously ill patients had to be cared for at home.²²

It was believed women religious were specially suited to perform certain work. In defense of religious orders, in 1855 one supporter stressed the practical advantages of the work of sisterhoods, saying that it has never been an intention to create such orders, "but the work came to us to be done, and a Sisterhood was the only practicable instrument for carrying it on"²³. This proponent was clearly downplaying the spiritual advantages of sisterhoods and suggesting legitimacy through employment as trained nurses. Women's religious orders were a logical choice for obtaining such skilled labour for several functional reasons. Economically, the only costs would be for training and supplies as the sisters would provide free labour. Regarding the women's ability, a decision to dedicate one's life to service was adequate evidence that a sister would be a compassionate as well as a responsible individual. In short, these nuns could provide the dedicated, 'Christian' service which society's existing institutions could not.

Without minimizing the importance of professional medical treatment by secular people, the real concern for the ill by someone dedicated to sacrificial love, such as a sister, was seen as a special asset. Nuns took vows of obedience within their orders and were thus totally committed to the projects to which

²²Hibbert 706.

²³Carter, The First Five Years of the House of Mercy, Clewer, 1855, 15f. As in Allchin 71.

their orders assigned them. Nuns were further enabled to be fine nurses, it was agreed, because their lives were uncluttered by duties of motherhood which dominated most women's lives in the mid-nineteenth century.²⁴

It is interesting that, just as nuns were supposedly suited to careers such as nursing, so too were these occupations apparently created to fulfil the needs of some women. In Victorian England, 'respectability' was the aim of the middle class. A woman's status was defined by whether or not she was gainfully employed. Because of the lack of adequate education, an alternative through which they may have defined themselves, middle class women were extremely dependent on their husbands. It was thus necessary for the husbands of such families to earn a living wage, which ensured that the wife need not work outside the home and could spend the family's wealth in visible ways, indicating their caste. Marriage was virtually the only occupation open to respectable women; spinsters had few options.²⁵

This situation was complicated for women by the fact that in the mid-nineteenth century there was a significantly larger number of women than men. This, of course, meant that if relationships were to remain monogamous, which respectable society demanded, not all women could have husbands. Because being a spinster could be such an embarrassment, many women welcomed a last chance to retain their pride by entering a religious community. For years Roman

²⁴Similar views are expressed in Rowell 110-113 and 277-293.

²⁵Hill 274.

Catholic women who may have missed the opportunity to be earthly brides had been able to become 'Brides-of-Christ'. Only in the late nineteenth century did this become an alternative for Anglican women.²⁶ Several Anglican theologians sympathized with single women who were exposed to public ridicule and thought to have nothing to offer the world, and envisioned that Sisterhoods could channel energy into productive, essential, services.²⁷ The view that the establishment of Anglican Sisterhoods was long overdue surfaced at least as early as 1829, when Robert Southey reflected as follows:

How is it that an object so beneficial, so needful, so pious, as that of providing a ready honourable retreat for such [female] persons should have been overlooked? But where is the woman who shall be the Clara or Teresa of Protestant England. . . .²⁸

To be sure, within the Church of England, there was debate regarding the merits of its religious orders. Not all of the arguments favouring the establishment of Anglican sisterhoods were merely to promote the logical claims of the 'beneficial' institutions. Rather, much of the justification was in defence of Sisterhoods, delivered to convince the population that the Anglican Church, in general, was not 'sinking to popery'. Many Anglicans looked toward Roman Catholicism with a great deal of

²⁶Hill 10.

²⁷One such theologian, Sir William Cuninghame, expressed this view in a letter on 17 March 1737 to Dr. Thomas Sharpe. As in Allchin 30.

²⁸R. Southey, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society vol. 11, 1829. As in Allchin 41.

distrust, equating it with superstition. Roman Catholic priests, in particular, were often assumed to have become corrupt due to the degree of their power. The criticism directed at Roman Catholicism from various other denominations was both widespread and strong. Nova Scotia was no exception. Nova Scotian newspapers, pamphlets, tracts, and books were extremely critical of the Roman Catholic Church. Consider the following examples of titles of pamphlets, available in Nova Scotia, which warned of the evil associated with Roman Catholicism:

Goode, William, (Rev). Rome's Tactics; Or a Lesson for England from the Past: Showing that the Great Object of Popery Since the Reformation Has Been to Subvert and Run Protestant Churches and Protestant States. London: The Christian Book Society, 1868.

Gillies, Archibald C. (Rev). Popery Dissected; Its Absurd, Inhuman, Unscriptural, Idolatrous and Anti Christian Assumptions, Principles and Practises Exposed from its own Standard Works; Being a series of Unanswered Letters Addressed to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Arichat, Nova Scotia. Pictou: William Harris, 1874.²⁹

Anti-Catholic sentiment rose in Nova Scotia in the mid-nineteenth century after levelling off from the beginning of the century. Joseph Howe and several politicians were leaders in the organized aversion to Roman Catholicism, and in fact tried to 'purge' the Liberal Party of all Catholics so that only Protestants would be in positions of power. Anti-Catholic literature was popular among many Protestants and served to separate them from Catholics.³⁰

²⁹Both tracts are in the Cox Collection, Public Archives of Nova Scotia [PANS].

³⁰J. Brian Hanington, Every Popish Person (Archdiocese of Halifax, 1984) 115-16.

Doubtless many Anglicans shared with Protestants a dislike and suspicion of the Roman Catholic Church. Historically, nuns had been a overt symbol of the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, in the nineteenth century and often still today, many Anglicans wanted to distance themselves from sisterhoods regardless of whether the nuns were Anglican or Roman. Conversely, advocates of Anglican Women's orders spent a great deal of time proclaiming that sisters need not be unique to the Roman Catholic Church, and, that their appearance in the Church of England was not a sign of Romanism. The following statement by Southey was typical of Victorian Anglo Catholics who tried to convince other members of the Church of the legitimacy of nuns. "There is nothing Romish, nothing superstitious, nothing fanatical in such associations; nothing but what is righteous and holy."³¹ Despite their personal vehemence regarding the fact that Anglican sisterhoods would not swing the church closer to Romanism, early proponents of Anglican women's orders camouflaged their attempts at founding convents. Neale, who was forbidden to exercise his spiritual functions at Sackville College from 1847-63, by the Bishop of Chichester, for his tendency to use outward signs and symbols, knew he must move cautiously in the establishment of convents. He advertised without directly mentioning sisterhoods. In his own words:

I have printed a little statement of our scheme, simply speaking of nurses, 'whether ladies or others', and dropping all name of a sisterhood. This is to be sent to the 210 parishes which lie in our district, not in my name, but in that of old Gream, who heartily entered into

³¹Southey's Progress 1841, 317. As in Allchin 42.

the plan. What the result will remain to be seen. I have given you the very little idea of the eagerness of cooperation I have met with³²

Clearly Neale assumed that the Church of England would be wary of sisterhoods because of their association with Anglo Catholicism, and even worse, Roman Catholicism. Thus Neale took measures to stress their public worth.

In the mid-nineteenth century, another way the Anglican Sisterhoods distanced themselves from Romans was to avoid life vows. Since such vows were among the most significant element in the life of a Roman Religious, the Anglican Church's abstention from them enabled 'vows' to act as a major distinguishing feature between the two churches. One advocate was especially precise in noting an adequate length of Anglican Sister's vows, saying they should be taken for periods of not more than five years and not less than three months.³³ It is difficult to discern for certain whether Anglicans saw fault in perpetual vows because such rules allowed too much dictatorial behaviour by Church hierarchy, or if they were merely searching for a method to distinguish themselves from Roman Catholics.

Another accusation against Anglican nuns was that these women interfered with the Victorian family ideal in which all authority

³²From Eleanor A Rowle, John Mason Neale, D.D.: A Memoir (London 1906) p.236. As in The House of my Pilgrimage p.11. 'Old Gream' was an elderly clergyman and father of Anne Gream, one of the first two women who joined the sisterhood Neale founded.

³³Neale as in Allchin 47. The Anglican Church's view on life vows has changed in that sisters usually now take them after three and a half years. This is comparable with most Roman orders which encourage vows after two and a half years.

came from the husband. The degree to which nuns may have been uninterested in the traditional role of motherhood is certainly arguable. Whatever the case, the advent of nuns in the Anglican Church initiated female roles which the church had never before had to consider. Although professed women still had to respect male priests and bishops, their roles were different from secular women, and were based on their right to institute and direct most of their own activities.³⁴ Such a display of feminism by the middle class was disconcerting to the members of society who appreciated the traditional structure of church and family.

It seems that some people did recognize that Women's Orders were indicative of growing discontent in the middle class and would thus be potentially disruptive of various traditional forms of authority. Because they were suspected of introducing unnecessary change, supporters of Anglican Women's Orders were forced to establish themselves in a manner that avoided arousing excessive hostility which might further split the Anglican Church. Due to the necessity of a quiet, careful emergence, the growth of such institutions took longer than it might have in a more encouraging environment.³⁵

Regardless of the many obstacles preventing widespread approval of Anglican sisterhoods, several communities were established in England. In 1848 both The Community of Saint Mary the Virgin in Wantage and The Society of the Most Holy Trinity in

³⁴Hill 271.

³⁵Allchin 43.

Devonport were founded. In 1851 the Community of Saint John the Baptist was established, as was the Society of Saint Margaret at East Grimstead in 1855.³⁶ The growth and success of these orders is obvious from the Report on Sisterhoods, Brotherhoods and Deaconesses which was prepared by the Lower House to be presented and debated at the Canterbury Convocation of 1878. The report counted the number of sisters, novices and postulants at six hundred sixty. Looking at one of the larger orders in particular, the House of Mercy at Clewer saw 227 novices admitted between 1849 and 1881. Even though withdrawals were frequent, the membership experienced a steady rise through the four decades.³⁷ By 1912 there were at least thirteen hundred Anglican sisters worldwide. Michael Hill, in The Religious Order, the most recent study of religious orders in the Church of England, comments of the mid-nineteenth century period that "...the sisterhoods were an influential section of the Church of England if numbers are important."³⁸

Clearly the status of Anglican sisterhoods was relatively firm by the turn of the century. It is difficult to discern whether there was a time in which sisterhoods were viewed as a conscious choice for women, an alternative to marriage, and perhaps even an objection to traditional marriage and motherhood. Whatever the

³⁶Rowell 110.

³⁷Carter, The First Ten Years at the House of Mercy, Clewer. As in Allchin 81.

³⁸Hill 198-99, 280.

case, it is certain that sisterhoods created a niche for certain Anglican women. Hill notes this phenomenon in the following passage:

It was largely as a result of the work done by individuals like Florence Nightengale and by the Anglican sisterhoods that female celibacy became defined as a role which might be consciously chosen and thus lost some of its negative valuation.³⁹

Many communities started congregations in various parts of the British Empire. In England between 1845 and 1870, twenty-nine congregations were founded with twenty-four more established by the turn of the century.⁴⁰ In 1882 the Toronto Globe reported that an Anglican sisterhood would be founded in Toronto " which will take in hand and carry on the work which is said to be so successfully carried out in England and the United States."⁴¹ The Canadian orders eventually established included the Sisters of Saint John the Divine, 1884, and the Sisters of the Church, 1891.

Several women's religious congregations did form in Canada, although their membership was never as large as in England or the United States. The most successful was in Ontario, still the home of the two above-mentioned major Anglican sisterhoods. Since the introduction of sisterhoods into Canada in the 1880s, three religious orders have served in Nova Scotia. So far the longest has lasted fourteen years. Because Roman Catholic orders were so

³⁹Hill 274.

⁴⁰Peter F. Anson, The Call of the Cloister (London: SPCK, 1956) 591-92.

⁴¹Globe 28 July 1882.

successful in Nova Scotia,⁴² one would have expected similar success with religious orders from another Christian religion with a large membership in Nova Scotia, the Anglican Church.⁴³ However, the success of Anglican religious congregations certainly did not parallel that of Roman orders. Furthermore, in an economically disadvantaged region such as the Maritimes, there must have been sufficient work in health care and social work for each of the orders to have stayed longer. That they did not suggests a lack of support for them, which will be examined in the following chapters.

The congregations served quietly when they were here and thus far, unfortunately, have received little if any recognition in history. The three congregations were significant in their contributions to society. It is interesting to note from the perspective of single women involved in community, which projects they undertook, and then discern what they thought was important. These women were exceptions in so many ways. Now that women's history is gaining its rightful position in Canadian History, it is important to show their multi-dimensional roles.

⁴²For example, the North American Sisters of Charity central offices and Motherhouse are located in Halifax. Other orders that have been in Nova Scotia for significant periods of time include The Sisters of the Sacred Heart, The Sisters of the Good Shepherd, the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame, the Sisters of Saint Martha, the Sisters of Service, and the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. For more information see Hannington, Every Popish Person.

⁴³See TABLE 1: "Nova Scotian Church Membership 1881-1981".

CHAPTER 1

The Sisters of Saint Margaret and the Church Hospital, 1891-93

The first instance of an Anglican women's religious order in Nova Scotia was in Halifax in 1890. The starting point for the history of these women, however, more aptly begins with a brief examination of their Roman Catholic counterparts whose Nova Scotian work began in the mid-nineteenth century. The Roman Catholic sisters were solidly founded by the later part of the century, thus their history creates a context into which Anglican sisters became established. Both groups of sisters administered charitable institutions on behalf of the church, although the degree of success was much higher with Roman Catholic orders. Furthermore as the following pages illustrate, the establishment of Anglican nuns may have been as much in response to the success of Roman Catholic nuns as it was to the social needs of the province.

Two Roman Catholic women's religious orders came to Halifax in 1849 at the invitation of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Halifax,

William Walsh.¹ Their primary intention was to establish free and public schools for Roman Catholic children. Parents and religious officials were concerned about the quality and availability of education in the city. As mentioned in the previous chapter, an anti-Roman Catholic campaign, partly under the direction of Joseph Howe, as well as a general domination of business and government by Protestants, fuelled anti-Roman Catholic sentiment in nineteenth-century Nova Scotia. This situation impeded the effectiveness of the public education system which separated Roman Catholic and Protestant. In 1863, of 5,591 Roman Catholic children between five and fifteen, there were only 2,348 attending schools.² However, Archbishop Walsh and other Halifax Roman Catholics saw education as a obvious starting point for raising the Roman Catholic population's level of respectability.

The Religious of the Sacred Heart and the Sisters of Charity filled a need that straddled the social classes by operating both free and private schools. In appealing to refined, upper class, Roman Catholic families, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart advertised

¹Walsh was Bishop from 1844 to 1852 and then Archbishop until 1858. The structure and presentation of this chapter differs from the next two chapters due to the availability of material, the nature of the institution, and the short time it existed. More consideration is given to the context of the religious diversity in which the Anglican nuns worked, and especially their comparison with Roman Catholic sisters. Had the same structure been used in this chapter as in the others, too much speculation would have had to be made. In attempting to make this study of Anglican nuns in Nova Scotia as complete as possible, these Boston sisters had to be included, and a separate methodology utilized.

²Terrance Burns, "Public School Education of Catholics in the City of Halifax, 1819-1900" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Saint Mary's University, 1962) 31.

their private school which operated out of their convent, one week after their arrival in 1849:

The public are respectfully informed that an academy for Young Ladies has been opened at Brookside, where solid and refined education will be given to day school and boarders...Music, the Modern Languages, and every branch of a Polite Education will be taught. The formation of the hearts of the Young Ladies to virtue and the culture of their minds by the study of those subjects which are intended to constitute a superior education being the great objective which the Ladies of the Sacre Coeur have in view, no pains will be spared to attain the desired end. . .³

Because the Sisters of Charity were uncloistered, they were able to teach in various locations in Halifax and the rest of the province. They quickly became involved in health care, education, and social work. In 1873 the Sisters of Charity established an institution similar to the Sacred Heart's private school. Operating on motherhouse property on the Bedford Highway, the boarding and day school served the Roman Catholic elite of the province as a boarding or day school. Overall, the Sisters of Charity concentrated mostly on parochial schools where payment was accepted if the child's parents could afford it, but many children still attended freely.⁴

It appears that Roman Catholics came from behind, to surpass the calibre of Protestant education. Qualified educators of unarguably high moral character, the sisters obtained particular

³Hanington 136-37.

⁴See Sister Maura, The Sisters of Charity, Halifax (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1956) for a thorough account of the work of the community.

success training Nova Scotian "Young Ladies". Along with their competence, their services offered significant economic benefits to education in Halifax. Under a vow of personal poverty, as well as chastity and obedience, these sisters were not paid for their teaching. Therefore the tuition in the schools in which they taught went to building and teaching supplies rather than on wages.

There was no comparable institution in Halifax for Protestant women. In particular, Bishop Hibbert Binney, the bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Nova Scotia since 1851, was painfully aware of the lack of education available for young Anglican women. Much to the bishop's horror, some of the parents of these young women were actually sending them to Roman Catholic Schools run by the Sisters of Charity and the Sacred Heart Sisters. Protective as well as envious, Bishop Binney lamented in 1886 in his address to Synod over the many Anglican children entrusted to Roman Catholic educators. He was further concerned over the lagging of Anglicans behind the Baptists who had a school in Wolfville, the Methodists who operated Mount Allison's Ladies' College in Sackville, and the Presbyterians who had proposed a female seminary for women.⁵

Bishop Binney died in 1887 and was succeeded the next year by Frederick Courtney, formerly the Rector of Trinity Church, Boston. In Courtney's first Synodical address he noted the failure of any progression in the area of an Anglican School for women. He reiterated Binney's appeal for the school and also compared Anglicans with other denominations, referring to the "crying need"

⁵Synod Journal 1886 p.88.

for a Church School for Girls:

Judged by this standard, the Roman Catholic and Presbyterians are more for female education than church people in Nova Scotia, where so called church parents are so little governed by principle that they can send their daughters where, in their most impressionable years, they are exposed to grievous religious errors of excess or defect, or what Christianity they have is without church doctrine, ultimately turning for lack of it to the cast iron system of Rome, or sinking into an indolent acquiescence in the condition, and thinking it immaterial.⁶

The Bishop went on to assert that Nova Scotian girls would never be in a position to obtain higher education if this diocese did not give them the necessary foundation. If the women were sufficiently determined to attend such institutions as Harvard or the University of Cambridge, they would have to leave Nova Scotia at an early age. The diocese would thereby lose these women forever.⁷

It was not only two consecutive Nova Scotian bishops who looked to other denominations' systems of educating young women with envy and admiration. Church Work, a monthly journal of the Anglican Church published sporadically in various locations throughout the diocese from 1876 to 1927,⁸ listed everyday theological and liturgical commentaries relating to the Anglican

⁶Synod Journal 1888 p.55.

⁷Synod Journal 1888 p.55.

⁸From 1878-1884 and 1884-1891, Church Work was published in Halifax and Digby, N.S. respectively. It was published from 1876-1907 as a monthly and from 1907 - [1924-27] as a bimonthly. See Lynn Murphy and Brenda Hicks, Nova Scotia Newspapers vol.1 (Halifax, 1990). Most of these issues are available at the Anglican Diocesan Archives and PANS. Its articles contained little specific local news so it does not seem irregular or significant that the Church hospital is never reported.

Church as well as others. Although several articles criticized "Rome and Popery", in 1889 an article was published that congratulated Roman Catholic administration, albeit somewhat sarcastically, for their use of sisters as school teachers because they were inexpensive and well versed in their faith. In the author's words, ". . .they have not only educated the influential future mothers of their own people but attracted to their female colleagues these of so-called Protestants." The author professed to be almost baffled as to why the Anglican Church had, to date, failed to utilize the services of their own sisterhoods. He then praised the sisters of the English Church, ". . .thoroughly educated as they are and from whose curriculum the English classical writers are not excluded by the "Index"." The author closed the article with the question "how long shall our present indifference to vital interests continue?"⁹

There was never an attempt the diocese to affiliate a girls' school with a Anglican sisterhood. Although the editor of the article in Church Work was aware of the existence of Anglican sisterhoods, most Nova Scotian Anglicans undoubtedly did not realize that such orders existed. The first arrival of an Anglican women's community in Canada was 1891. Thus it is unlikely that a connection between Anglican sisters and a church school was a widely acknowledged option. Bishops Binney and Courtney must have been familiar with Anglican sisterhoods; they may deliberately have decided against suggesting them due to the association of nuns with

⁹Church Work 14:2 1889, p.20.

Roman Catholicism and the degree of anti-Catholic sentiment in Nova Scotia during the late nineteenth century. This association of nuns with Catholicism will be examined later in this chapter.

In a report to Synod in 1890 Courtney repeated his comments of two years earlier as well as those of his predecessor four years earlier, addressing the desperate need for a Church School for Girls. He added that he sincerely hoped one would become a reality before his next address to Synod. The school materialized; it was formally opened 08 January 1891 in Windsor, Nova Scotia. By the end of that school year there were 65 boarders and 19 day students at "Edgehill". The Church School for Girls was operating "far past capacity".¹⁰ Many Anglicans were undoubtedly relieved to have a school for girls available.

Along with reinforcing Bishop Binney's recommendations regarding diocesan outlook, especially in reference to the education of Anglican women, Bishop Courtney also brought a new proposal to his second Synod. In 1890 he announced a plan to establish a private hospital for paying Church of England patients. Bishop Courtney explained that "it was felt that it would be an advisable thing to have a place provided where our own sick, who could be offered to pay for accommodation, could be received and cared for."¹¹ Unlike Binney's comparison of women's education with similar institutions run by other churches, Bishop Courtney is less transparent regarding the need of a hospital. He did however,

¹⁰Synod Journal 1892 p.19.

¹¹Synod Journal 1890 p.58.

indicate that if properly run, an Anglican Church Hospital could pay for itself without going in debt as the Halifax Infirmary had. The Sisters of Charity operated the Halifax Infirmary on 14 Barrington Street from 1886.¹² Perhaps because the Infirmary was not the economic success that the Roman Catholic system of education was, or perhaps because this bishop would not allow his envy to be so obvious, Bishop Courtney did not directly compare a potential Church of England Hospital with the Roman Catholic one. Nevertheless, the series of events leading up to the announcement of the Church of England Infirmary made it clear that the Anglican interest in a hospital in 1890 represented another attempt to imitate other denominations that successfully ran social institutions.

After outlining the feasibility of a Church Hospital in his Synodical address of 1890, Bishop Courtney introduced a well thought-out plan for the administration of an Anglican private hospital. After speaking on the topic of the hospital for some time, Bishop Courtney delivered the following rather blunt sentence: "I hope that this project may be realized, and that the nursing may be done by Sisters or Deaconess...."¹³ His concern for

¹²This date is noted by Hanington. It was not actually reported in Belcher's Almanac until 1891 when it was listed as being run by Mother Vincent and the Sisters of Charity. They relocated to the present site on Queen Street some years later.

¹³Deaconesses were women who assisted the clergy, mostly by caring for the sick. Unlike sisters, their work was more active than contemplative, and they did not live in convents or take vows. The Wesleyan Methodists and English Baptists also accepted deaconess orders in 1891. See Dale Johnson, Women in English Religion, 1700-1925 (New York: Edwin Mellen P, 1983) 181-84.

the reaction of his audience is obvious in the way the Bishop slipped the words "Sisters" into his sentence. The rest of the sentence, probably said without pause, legitimized the sisters' position in a hospital by noting their aptitude and tradition in this area. They were people, he continued who were:

. . . well-trained and who may be expected to give their lives to the work; and who will be capable of training such women amongst ourselves as may feel they have a vocation for a service which has called forth the energies and enlisted the devotion of such as Florence Nightingale and Sister Dora. We may not shut our eyes to the prospect of some being found amongst us who will object to the Sisters or Deaconesses, as savouring of imitation of the Church of Rome; that little attention will be paid to any such cavils. . . .¹⁴

Bishop Courtney anticipated and to some degree accommodated the anti-Catholic views that would be activated by the mention of sisterhoods.

Along with the presentation of this announcement, the article from Church Work which blamed Anglicans for failing to utilize sisters is a further indication of many Anglicans' negative attitude to their own women religious. The conspicuousness of Roman Catholic nuns in Halifax in the late nineteenth century¹⁵ and the fact that they wore full length dark habits and headpieces,¹⁶ made these women very recognizable 'walking institutions of the

¹⁴"Address at the Opening of the Twenty-first Session of Synod, 1890, by Bishop Courtney" 12-13.

¹⁵This standing developed through such areas as the Sisters of Charity's work with a shipload of cholera victims in 1886, and their operation of institutions for unwed mothers, orphans, and the elderly.

¹⁶Veils were introduced a couple of decades later.

church'. Because of this association, many Anglicans were uncomfortable with the idea of having nuns in their own church.

Protestants were often suspicious that Roman Catholics might try to infiltrate their own denominations. Although Anglican congregations were closer than any others in Halifax to Roman Catholics in theology and doctrine, they were probably as suspicious as other denominations of the influence of Catholicism on their church.¹⁷ This situation was, however, varied among Anglicans due to the segments of the church which emphasized either the Catholic or Protestant roots of Anglicanism. It follows thus that Anglo Catholics were more supportive of the introduction of Anglican Sisterhoods to Halifax than were their more evangelical colleagues. Before introducing the idea of sisters running a church hospital, Bishop Courtney discussed the matter with a committee of church officials formed on 23 January 1890. Those who agreed with the positive appraisal of this group as well as the author of the supportive article in Church Work, were undoubtedly confident Anglo Catholics. Those they were trying to convince were the low church Evangelicals.

It was not an easy subject for Bishop Courtney to broach to Nova Scotian Anglicans in his first year in office. He was certainly aware of some of the obstacles that sisterhoods in England were forced to overcome. In his published memoir John Mason Neale, the founder of the East Grinstead Sisters, recounted

¹⁷There are numerous articles and sermons written and published by Anglicans that condemn the Roman Catholic Church, its 'belief in magic' and suspicion of the Pope.

the suspiciousness of a woman suffering from scarlet fever. It is a single incident typical of many that occurred in the late nineteenth century:

The mother, a widow out of her sense (with anxiety, not disease); a boy, and two girls, widely delirious, only kept alive with port and brandy; all the cases Mr Whyte thought desperate. I went back to town, ordered a fly, and Sister K. was off in half an hour. The woman in one of her lucid intervals said, 'I will not have any ladies who worship idols in my house.' However, Mr Whyte talked very reasonably to her and finally she consented.¹⁸

It is interesting to note that although this woman was delirious and not in a state capable to care for herself or her children, her anti-Catholic views were so ingrained that she was about to refuse the help of a nun. Like many people, she assumed that any woman who wore a habit was a Roman Catholic nun; Roman Catholics, or 'those who worship images', were not welcome in her house.

There are numerous other indications given in the literature surrounding the Anglican Church in the late nineteenth century that anti-Catholic sentiment was unmanageable. Many Anglo Catholics as well as others were upset with the bigotry within the church. One article published in Nova Scotia in May 1890 however, termed such elitism and intolerance as Protestant Popery, the effects of which, ". . . can inspire the Pope and the man who denounces the Pope, the persecutor and the persecuted, the radical and the Conservative, the reformer and the enemy of reform. . . . we are obliged to limit ourselves to other kinds of racks and thumbscrews, to bitter words, theological nicknames, mean insinuations, back biting, koycotting

¹⁸E.A. Towle, John Mason Neale, D.D. 239-40. As in Rowell 112.

to craft cunning, vain boast."¹⁹

The Bishop also warned Nova Scotian Anglicans to improve their behaviour regarding their opinion of Roman Catholics. He ended his expose on women religious in his 1890 address to Synod saying that if it is regarded in the proper light, even the most distrustful would overcome and appreciate it.²⁰

One of Courtney's tactics in dealing with those who did not appreciate having Catholic influences in the Anglican Church, was to use some of the traditional arguments of the founders of Sisterhoods a few decades earlier in England, people such as Pusey and Neale who had actually founded sisterhoods. Most notably Courtney shared the assertions of cost efficiency, quality of health care, and a guarantee that sisterhoods would not bring the Anglican Church any closer to Rome.

Courtney foresaw that the economic cost of a hospital could be a deterrent to potential supporters. Thus he was clear that this was not to be a charitable institution, another economic burden on the diocese. Rather it was to be an upper class institution typifying Victorian respectability, operated for the convenience and quality care of the upper classes. Not entirely a heartless individual, Courtney remarked that those who could neither pay for themselves nor have others pay for them, could simply go to the

¹⁹Church Work 15:3 (May) 1890 p.46.

²⁰Synod Journal 1890 p.59.

Victoria Hospital.²¹

The City Hospital did not appeal to upper class Haligonians in the nineteenth century. Established in 1859 for a short period and then reopened in 1867 as the City and Provincial Hospital, the institution was for the lower class. As Colin Howell notes in a recent history of the Victoria General, the middle class equated sickness with sin and thus avoided hospital in fear of the lack of morality associated with them. Furthermore, it was assumed by the Halifax elite that most patients were transfers from the poor house.²² The tendency of middle and upper class Haligonians to associate hospitals with people of low class and low morality, was in keeping with the rest of the country. Hospitals were developed for the poor who had no alternatives when sick. There was a great deal of class bias toward those who used hospitals in the nineteenth century. Some criticism was merely due to a lack of knowledge regarding procedure in hospitals while some, including the following example, were concerned with the possible effects of the interaction of classes. Wendy Mitchinson notes that ". . . in 1861 most of the maternity cases in the Kingston General Hospital involved illegitimate births, and 45% of admissions were a result of alcohol induced disease."²³ It was toward these conditions and rumours, and the upper class mentality, that Bishop Courtney and

²¹Synod Journal 1890 p.58. He may have eventually regretted these words after the closure of the Church Hospital in 1893 due partly to the increased success of the Victoria Hospital.

²²Howell 13-19.

²³Mitchinson 44.

Church Hospital advocates appealed in 1890.

This view was aptly exhibited in an interview granted shortly before the opening of the Church Hospital. A reporter asked Dean Gilpin, a Church Hospital supporter, if he did not think there was already enough hospital accommodation in Halifax. Gilpin replied that there was "Plenty of room for such an institution as the one we are establishing. . . . There are many who would not on any occasion enter the Victoria General Hospital. Many want a private infirmary who would not go to a public establishment of that kind, and who would be glad and anxious to pay for the attendance received."²⁴ It was perhaps partly to keep out the lower classes as well as to save money that Church officials decided to admit only paying clients to the hospital. This ensured the hospital was run for the upper classes by the upper classes.

The kind of nursing care offered at the Church Hospital was to be special. At the middle of the nineteenth century, nurses in public hospitals were often regarded as being of 'questionable behaviour'. Some turned to nursing after being fired from domestic service. Nursing did not enjoy the professional standards and respect in the nineteenth century that it did a century later. Toward the end of the century, however, nursing respect had increased along with the rise of science. Nevertheless, in the 1890s some people, such as Dean Gilpin, continued to show concern that not only would potential patients of the Victoria Hospital be affected by fellow patients, but they might also be concerned about

²⁴Halifax Herald 04 August 1890 p.3.

the moral character of the nurses they encountered.²⁵

Nursing sisters, on the other hand, had a reputation -albeit stereotyped- as being consistently caring, devoted, and untiring caregivers. Their vow to poverty, chastity, and obedience meant they could give more to nursing than their secular colleagues who had families and other earthly concerns. Furthermore, they could be a fine moral example to their patients. Bishop Courtney expands on these points in the following solicitation: "The sick need our care, trained nurses are better than Sairey Gamp and Betsey Prig; and Christian ladies who have given themselves to the work, give a tone to all they do" ²⁶

As a last point regarding the appropriateness of Anglican Sisters in hospital work, Bishop Courtney notes their low cost. Although the diocese, upon inviting sisters, would have to pay for their personal maintenance, they did not have to pay them wages. The personal maintenance fees, furthermore would not amount to much for women who had taken personal vows of poverty. In short, sisterhoods could be the determining factor in whether a hospital was economically self-sufficient. On a larger scale, a growing sisterhood with many members could run numerous special projects, thereby representing a large and efficient, yet inexpensive labour force.

Bishop Courtney's official announcement for a church hospital was at Synod on June 27, 1890. However, a planning committee had

²⁵Howell 39.

²⁶Synod Journal 1890 p.59.

been in operation since January and must have accomplished a great deal of preliminary work, as progression toward the opening of the hospital was expedient. One month after Synod, the Acadian Recorder reported that the Committee of the Church of England Infirmary had inspected and rented a building on 107 Queen Street, the later site of the Halifax Infirmary,²⁷ for the purpose of establishing a hospital. It was intended that a more suitable building be built at a later date, after some initial success had been attained.²⁸

On the first of August, Sisters Sarah and Margaret from the community of the Holy Rood in York, England, arrived to take charge of the hospital. One week later it opened with accommodation for seven patients, although those with infectious diseases such as cholera and tuberculosis were not accepted. Rather than a permanent medical staff for the hospital, the Church of England Infirmary operated on the basis that the patients selected their own physician and surgeon whom they would pay separately from their boarding bill at the hospital.²⁹ This was acknowledged to benefit the patients because they would not have to change from a longstanding doctor to a new one assigned by the hospital. At the same time, patients could profit from the quiet hospital environment, the attention of the sisters, and medical equipment.

²⁷In 1886 the Sisters of Charity founded the Halifax Infirmary, which was located on Barrington Street in the 1890s.

²⁸Acadian Recorder 28 July 1890 p.3.

²⁹Acadian Recorder 23 August 1890 p.3.

Most of the financing of the hospital was provided through payments by patients as well as donations from each of the five Halifax Anglican parishes, St. Luke's, St. Paul's, St. Mark's, St. Stephen's, and St. George's. Each parish was responsible for furnishing a room which would then be named after the parish. This public acknowledgement of their responsibility in a hospital available for public viewing and inspection was a wise move by the committee. No parish would want to be shabbily represented in the new private hospital. A report in the Halifax Herald, before the building was officially opened, noted that St. Paul's Parish had the front room in the hospital and it was "especially well furnished".³⁰

Excluding doctors' charges and medicine, the cost per patient on a weekly basis was approximately seven dollars in 1890. As the wages of skilled and unskilled male labourers in Halifax in the late eighteenth century ranged from seven to fifteen dollars, and their cost of board between three and five dollars per week in the north end of the city,³¹ Church Hospital fees were obviously set with the upper class in mind. The following budget for the hospital was prepared by the committee formed in January 1890 to study the cost of setting up the hospital:

³⁰Morning Herald 04 August 1890 p.3

³¹Royal Commission on the Relations of Capital and Labour, Nova Scotia - Evidence. (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1889) 41-201.

COST OF OUTFIT³²

18 rooms for patients.....	\$500
Rooms for sisters and attendants....	\$200
Kitchens and Pantry outfit.....	\$200
Incidentals.....	<u>\$100</u>
	1000
Cash required for initial expenses and for working capital at the start	\$500 to 1000

CHURCH EXPENSES

Rent and taxes.....	\$500
Fuel.....	100
Light.....	100
Food.....	400
Servants and wages.....	200
Incidentals including cont- ingencies for Sisters....	300
Food for five patients... <u>400</u>	
	2000

Receipts averaging 5 patients at \$7 per week.....	1825
Deficit	175

Almost all of the above costs were raised by the time the hospital opened. However, the estimate was inadequate and further donations had to be attained. Nevertheless, the budget is useful in indicating how the money was spent, especially when the hospital later had economic difficulties.

Bishop Courtney formally opened the Church of England Infirmary in the evening of August 06, 1890. He was assisted by several local clergy and diocesan officials, Reverend Owen Jones, Dean Gilpin, Canon Partridge, Reverend Dr. Bullock, Reverend Hague, Reverend J.O.Ruggles and the planning committee. The following account appeared the day after the opening, in the Acadian Recorder:

³²Halifax Herald 04 August 1890 p.3

Introductory services were held in the sitting room, after which the clergy, accompanied by Sisters Margaret and Sarah, marched in procession through St. Luke's and St. Paul's rooms, thence upstairs through St. Mark's, St. Stephen's, St. George's and dormitory, thence downstairs to kitchen, dining room, and storehouse, saying Psalms 143 and 43. Special prayers in storehouse, dining room Service closed in sitting room.³³

It is not clear how contact was made with the Sisters of the Holy Rood in England to provide nursing care for the hospital. One newspaper noted that they were obtained through an influential English clergyman, but fails to say how he knew the Diocese of Nova Scotia was looking for nursing sisters. In September 1890, the Maritime Medical Bulletin, in reference to the Church of England Infirmary, said it was run by "professional nurses who have come out from England." It is interesting that this secular journal listed the sisters' qualifications rather than their religious vocation.³⁴ The order was a well-known nursing order in nineteenth-century England that worked in various parts of the country.³⁵

The opening of the Church Hospital received much attention in Halifax newspapers. In the fall of that year there were a few updates on the hospital,³⁶ which often noted the number of patients

³³Acadian Recorder 06 August 1890 p.3.

³⁴Maritime Medical Bulletin September 1890 p. xiv.

³⁵As of 1988, there are eight members of the community. Unfortunately contact was unable to be made with the community through correspondence, and since they were replaced within months by another order which lasted longer, the Sisters of Saint Margaret, this chapter will concentrate more fully on the Boston sisters.

³⁶For example 23 August 1890 p.3.

currently using the hospital, but these trickled off by the new year. In fact, when the Sisters of the Holy Rood left Halifax there was no mention of their departure in the press.

The story of the Church of England Infirmary may be continued by considering its connection with the Sisters of Saint Margaret in Boston. This order was engaged primarily in the operation of the Boston Children's Hospital since coming from England in 1871. They were also involved in nursing homes, social work, private and public schools, parish work, and other hospitals. A one sentence entry in the Sisters of Saint Margaret community diary written by Mother Louise on 17 February 1891 saying that Sister Paula, a thirty-three year old woman who had been in the community for fourteen years, went to see the community chaplain about going to Halifax. Then on 26 February 1891 another entry explained the immediacy of sending sisters to Halifax:

A telegram came from Mr King asking for Sister Paula to go to Halifax tonight. She took it to the church and Father Hall came down and then a telegram came from Mr. Davenport and he came down again..... Sister Paula went down to see her father and mother, Sister Martha went out to get their tickets, sister Mary Isabel for _____. We had Vespers at 5:45 and Sister Paula and Sister Mary Isabel went down in a carriage and off by the train.³⁷

Sister Paula stayed in Halifax until 20 June and Sister Mary Isabel somewhat longer. The Mother Superior went to Halifax in April of 1891 to inspect the hospital and to visit the sisters.

The Church of England Infirmary is not mentioned in the press between the fall of 1890 and 13 March 1891. At that time, nothing

³⁷Community diary 26 Feb 1891.

was said about the Sisters of the Holy Rood, but three weeks after Sisters Paula and Mary Isabel left for Halifax, it was reported that a new building, St. Margaret's Hall on College Street had undergone the necessary renovations for a hospital.³⁸ Presumably the two Sisters of Saint Margaret were operating the hospital, which reported six patients under treatment in March. A rather anxious statement in the last sentence of this hospital report indicated that "there is, of course, accommodations for a much larger number, and no doubt as the hospital becomes better known, its advantages understood, its successful career will be assured."³⁹

In the fall of 1891 an advertisement in the October, November, and December issues of the Maritime Medical Bulletin offered the superior accommodation of the Church Hospital.

THE CHURCH HOSPITAL,

HALIFAX, N.S.

-- HAS --

SUPERIOR ACCOMMODATION

For paying patients of both sexes.

It is situated in a quiet neighborhood on COLLEGE STREET, and has

SPACIOUS HALLS AND AIRY WARDS.

Is in charge of Trained Nursing Sisters from St. Margaret's Home, Boston, Mass., a branch of the well-known Sisterhood of East Grinstead, Sussex, England.

Patients are provided with NURSING, NOURISHMENT and HOME COMFORTS at

MODERATE CHARGES.

Patients select and pay their own Surgeon or Physician, and have full freedom of choice when requiring religious ministrations.

For further particulars apply to the Sister in charge.

References in Halifax: Very Rev. EDWIN GILPIN, D. D., Dean of Nova Scotia; A. J. COWIE, M. D.; W. B. SLATTER, M. D.; H. H. READ, M. D.; Hon. J. W. LONLEY, Attorney-General of Nova Scotia.

³⁸Acadian Recorder 13 March 1891 p.3. The building has had a long history; it has housed a school for boys, a 19th century detoxification centre, a hotel, and today, apartments. Please see the appendix with a map outlining the property and a photograph of the building in the late 1890s.

³⁹Acadian Recorder 13 March 1891 p.3.

With the exception of this advertisement, the Church Hospital received little attention in local newspapers in 1891. This lack of publicity may have been partly due to Bishop Courtney's absence from the diocese during this time. The Bishop was seriously ill for almost a year. While in London he consulted physicians, who advised him to attempt to recuperate in a southern climate rather than return to Nova Scotia.⁴⁰ He did not return to the province until April 1892. It is uncertain whether the bishop had much contact with, or responsibility for the sisters. Even if it was not he who was responsible for, the sisters, those who were -such as Dean Gilpin- may have been too much occupied with the running of the diocese to have had time for the Church Hospital's administration from the fall of 1891 to the spring of 1892.

In March 1892, the annual meeting of the Church Hospital was held under the chairmanship of Dean Gilpin.⁴¹ It was reported that from the hospital's opening in August 1890 until January 1892, ninety-three patients had been treated and five deaths had occurred. The hospital's directors appear to have regarded the operation of the hospital as continuous since its inception in August of 1890, even though there was an unaccounted change in management when the Sisters of the Holy Rood left and the Sisters

⁴⁰Acadian Recorder 03 September 1891 p.3.

⁴¹According to newspapers, this was the only annual meeting the hospital ever held.

of Saint Margaret came to Halifax.⁴² There was great praise of the hospital at the annual meeting. It was reported in the Acadian Recorder that "The Church Hospital is a most useful institution, and it is hoped that it may receive sufficient support to place it upon a solid pecuniary basis."⁴³ Later that month, the hospital's directors seemed to declare the hospital a more permanent institution, by deciding to incorporate it by an act of parliament. Furthermore, they sought to expand their services to include children and 'incurables'.⁴⁴

Two months later the Church Hospital received a visit from the members of the Province's Medical Association. By September that year a renovation was completed, as well as a remodelling of the heating and plumbing. In particular the plumbing received high honours from the city health inspector and sanitary engineer.⁴⁵ All the rooms were painted and papered. The Acadian Recorder described the College Street location as being "one of the best in the city for hospital purposes. The surroundings are airy and healthy, and the view seaward very fine."⁴⁶

Considering the consistent progress of the hospital, it was

⁴²Furthermore, according to community diaries, once the SSM took over, there were several periods of one or two months when the sisters left Halifax to do other community work. This was in keeping with the community procedure of setting up hospitals for others to operate on a more permanent basis.

⁴³Acadian Recorder 04 March 1892 p.3.

⁴⁴Acadian Recorder 16 March 1892 p.3.

⁴⁵Halifax Herald 04 October 1892 p.6.

⁴⁶Acadian Recorder 26 September 1892 p.3.

surprising that it suddenly closed at the end of March 1893. The announcement in the Acadian Recorder emphasized that the sisters had left, noting the hospital closure as a secondary factor:

The sisters in charge of the hospital, College Street, leave for Boston via Yarmouth tomorrow morning. The Hospital will be closed for the present. The sisters have made many friends in the city during their stay, who will sincerely regret their departure.⁴⁷

Another paper, The Digby Courier, reported that the reason for closing the church institution was that adequate accommodation was available at the Victoria General and Halifax Infirmary. Thus there was no longer a need for the Church Hospital.⁴⁸

The Victoria General had entered a new age in scientific medicine in the late nineteenth century. The quackery and unsanitary conditions of earlier decades were minimized and the class bias toward hospitals lessened. The niche the Church Hospital aimed to serve, the upper class, was no longer so anxious to avoid hospitals. Had the Church Hospital planning committee been created and a hospital embarked upon some years earlier, the private institution might have achieved more success and become more securely established.

Because of the short period of existence for the Church Hospital, Nova Scotia's first encounter with Anglican nuns was brief and unobtrusive. The other Society of Saint Margaret projects in North America tended to be more assertive and successful. They are worth examining to achieve a more accurate

⁴⁷Acadian Recorder 27 March 1893 p.3.

⁴⁸Digby Weekly Courier 07 April 1893 p.2.

and well rounded understanding of this women's order, the first to influence Nova Scotians.

The Sisters of Saint Margaret made their first transatlantic expedition from East Grinstead to Boston in 1871 in response to a request for sisters to run the Boston Children's Hospital. In 1873 more members came from England and the North American branch of the SSM was founded. The community grew surprisingly rapidly. There were twenty novitiates by 1880.⁴⁹ In the 1880s there were fifty-nine entrants and in the 1890s there were forty-four. Almost half of these women eventually left the convent, either of their own accord or through the decision of the Mother Superior.⁵⁰ Nevertheless the community was very active during this period. Its primary work outside the convent revolved around the Children's Hospital, which also experienced a rapid growth. The little seven-bed hospital received ninety-nine children treated by seven doctors the first year of the sisters' stay in Boston. By the end of their term at the hospital, the hospital had moved twice to accommodate growing numbers of patients. In 1917, the sisters' last year at 'The Children's', 3,287 children were cared for by forty-five doctors. A history of the hospital published in 1983 notes the continued appreciation shown the sisters for their thirty-six years of service; "The high standards of the Hospital maintained by the Sisterhood through so much growth and so many changes was perhaps the best proof of their ability to, and the greatest expression of

⁴⁹Sister Catherine Louise p. 36.

⁵⁰These figures were obtained from community registers.

their loving service."⁵¹

Other pursuits of the Sisters of Saint Margaret in the Boston area during the nineteenth century included a general school for girls opened in 1875, parish work at the Church of the Advent, and an embroidery school for girls.⁵² Within the convent, they had altar bread and embroidery departments, ran a private infirmary, and cared for parentless children. Combined, the social work experience of the SSM was broad as they sought to fill various needs.

The Sisters of Saint Margaret who went to Halifax were Sisters, Paula, Amy, Mary Isabel, Lois, and Alexia. Very little information remains regarding the sisters' work and lives in Nova Scotia. Yet, through community diaries and obituaries, some biographical information has been gathered on three of the sisters who stayed the longest amount of time in Halifax. These details show that the sisters who came to Halifax, and inevitably influenced those they met in the hospital, were more than one dimensional personages.⁵³

Amy G.C. [Trufarst] was born in England in 1868 and came to the United States as a young woman. She entered the Sisters of Saint Margaret on 20 January 1886 and later received her religious

⁵¹Clement Smith, The Children's Hospital of Boston (Boston: Little Brown and Co, 1983) p.96.

⁵²Smith 96.

⁵³Of course, it would be wonderful to show their work in the context of their being in Halifax. As this is impossible, the following is done in lieu of this.

name, Sister Amy Margaret and professed life vows to the community. She first practised nursing at Saint Margaret's Infirmary, which operated from the convent, during her novitiate. She travelled to various locations in the United States as well as to Halifax to set up hospitals. Sister Amy was Superintendent of Nurses and President of the Nursing School at the Boston Children's Hospital from 1906 to 1913. She held the prominent offices of Novice and Guest Mistress with the community. Her obituary notes that she was preeminently a teacher; her teaching spirit is evident from the following excerpt from her address to the Jubilee Celebration of the Nurses' Alumni of the Children's Association:

During the years that I taught many of you at the Children's Hospital, the aim was to put before you the true Physician as your Ideal; and never was the Ideal more needed than today. This Christian doctor and nurse are what the sick and suffering need! It is not "What you know but what you are" that matters. Many whom I taught are now happy wives and mothers and know from experience that this is true.⁵⁴

Another Sister recounted a story about Sister Amy's sense of responsibility to nursing. She recounted, "I remember having a sore finger and when Sister Amy made an incision, I screamed. Sister said, 'I was given that finger to take care of so it is no longer yours but mine' I had to laugh, and then I screamed more."⁵⁵

Sister Vera was one of the second pair of sisters to go to

⁵⁴St Margaret's Quarterly Spring 1941 p.11.

⁵⁵Sisters of Saint Margaret North American Branch Archives. Green scrapbook made for someone's fiftieth anniversary of their profession. [1984].

Halifax. Sister Vera was born "Margaret Rowley" somewhere in Canada in 1849. When she entered religious life on 23 June 1894 she had been involved in charity work for some time. Sister Vera was especially remembered for her work with Afro-Americans at St. Monica's Home in Roxbury, Massachusetts. This small hospital, and later nursing home, for black women was located in an economically depressed area of Boston, and is indicative of the Sisters' tendency to work and live among the poor.⁵⁶ After President Eisenhower declared it illegal to discriminate based on colour, the home was also open to white women. It operated for a century until 1987. Sister Vera's obituary notes some of her characteristics:

She was a woman of strong character and deep convictions, with a tender sympathy for all the poor and suffering children of God, and this came out especially in her work with the coloured race. She was an excellent housekeeper and always ready to receive the Sisters and other friends with the most generous hospitality.⁵⁷

Sister Paula was the first sister to have an affiliation with Halifax. It is not known whether the Mother Superior suggested Sister Paula to the Church Hospital committee, or if they knew of her and contacted her directly. Sister Paula was born Sarah Matthews in 1856, to a prominent Boston family. She gave up a life of the 'best of everything' to enter Saint Margaret's Convent in June of 1877, and was professed four years later. Sister Paula spent most of her time in hospital administration and nursing. She

⁵⁶The home has recently been extensively renovated to become the North American motherhouse. The Sisters moved into it in January 1992.

⁵⁷Saint Margaret's Quarterly May 1927 p.18.

began in Saint Margaret's Infirmary and later spent many years at the Boston's Children's Hospital. She was very capable; at the private Infirmary, it was she who administered the ether at every operation.⁵⁸ Sister Paula was also very active within the convent, serving from 1919 to 1936 as assistant superior to Mother Suzannah.⁵⁹ Bishop Spence Burton, who knew Sister Paula for forty-eight years paid her the following tribute in 1950:

She gave up all to become a servant. [But] She could not give up her beauty and her charm, which were God-given and inalienable. She could, however, ultimately give up her [self] to disease and suffering 'even the death on the cross'. I am convinced that by nature she was independent, spoiled, impatient, and quick of temper. . . . Yet supernaturally she did endure a lot smilingly with countless of us whom she must have known were feeble minded and weak compared with her intelligence and wits.⁶⁰

Because she was from Boston, Sister Paula was able to visit her family regularly. The community diary often notes that Sister Paula went to visit her family before going on trips, such as her annual work at Lowell Island to care for convalescent children from the Boston Children's Hospital. Few if any Roman Catholic religious orders would have allowed this until after Vatican II.⁶¹

Sister . . . is was another sister of Saint Margaret who served during the latter part of the sisters' time in Halifax. She entered the convent in 1891 and thus would not have professed life

⁵⁸St. Margaret's Quarterly Fall 1950 p.15.

⁵⁹Mother Suzannah was originally from New Brunswick.

⁶⁰St. Margaret's Quarterly Fall 1950 p.19.

⁶¹In particular, Roman orders did not allow their nuns to eat in public with secular people.

vows before going to Halifax. Sister Lois, whose secular name was Louise Buhalter,⁶² died in 1900, only thirty-seven years of age, having been in the order less than a decade.

It is often a disheartening task to try to uncover the work of women religious. Their work was charitable, not often taking place in a structured environment. Individual efforts and accomplishments are rarely praised in a community where personal perfection is the goal of each member, an important element of such being humility. Nevertheless the facts surrounding the operation of a mission such as the Church Hospital can often be gleaned through reports sent regularly to the mother superior from the sister in charge, correspondence between the Diocesan bishop and the mother superior, and the minutes and papers produced by the actual running of the institution. In the case of the Church Hospital, none of the above remain and possibly none were ever produced.

There are no reports of the Church Hospital in the holdings of the Sisters of Saint Margaret Archives in Boston. It is quite possible, according to their archivist, that such reports were never sent. There are cases in the community's history when

⁶²Sister Lois was not able to use her secular name as her religious one because there was already another 'Louise' in the community, Mother Louise. This is usually the only case in which Anglican women's first names are changed upon entering the community. This is in contrast to Roman Catholic nuns who, before Vatican II, received a Religious name at their profession service, often a masculine or difficult-to-pronounce name totally different to their own. There are rules within communities stipulating certain patterns, such as the second name, if not given, being Margaret in the case of the sisters of Saint Margaret, of the name Mary being used excessively (my opinion!) in some orders.

sisters were noted in the community diary as having left the convent, and then sometimes a few years later as having come back. What occurred in the mission never filtered back to the convent. This situation varied from one mother superior to another as well as from order to order, regarding the standards and rules for the administration of missions. Also if the mission became permanent, the communication was more consistent as more responsibility was accepted.⁶³

Sometimes even permanency did not bring about full documentation. The author of The Children's Hospital of Boston, Clement Smith, was surprised at the lack of information on the individual work of the Sisters of St. Margaret at the hospital. He wrote that "they and their order must have wanted it so, but for the Historian, little information and few details remain. Even the numbers of those who served thus do not appear."⁶⁴ He continued by saying that the 20th Annual Review of the Hospital's Managers reported that there were thirty-eight men on the board and thirty-one doctors. There was some information of their work. Conversely the sisters were mentioned as wise and faithful, working without money toward the success of the hospital, but their numbers were unreported. Smith noted that it would have been helpful at least to know how many sisters worked at the hospital. A doctor himself, Smith may not realize that a lack of information surrounding women

⁶³The next chapter on the Sisters of Saint John the Divine concerns a branch house.

⁶⁴Clement Smith, The Children's Hospital of Boston (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1983) p.87.

religious' work is common.

Another archival misfortune is that Bishop Courtney's papers are not held at the Nova Scotian Diocesan Archives. Thus there is no record of the Church Hospital, or of invitations to the Sisters of the Holy Rood and the Sisters of Saint Margaret. Furthermore, there is no material on why the two sisterhoods left after such short stays. A recent Diocesan Archivist tried to find Bishop Courtney's papers pertaining to his time in office in Nova Scotia but was not successful.⁶⁵

Lastly, the community diary is not an accurate or adequate source in telling the history of the Church Hospital. As mentioned, it merely notes when a sister leaves or returns to the convent; it is very 'convent-centric'. Neither is there any mention of correspondence received from Halifax, or evidence of the consideration of accepting their invitation. Instead Sister Paula was abruptly described as having left for Halifax for four months with Sister Mary Isabel in tow. Worse yet, often when two sisters went somewhere, this could refer not only to Halifax but also to other destinations during this time period; sometimes, only one was reported to have come back. The reader wonders if the other stayed, which would make sense in the case of the Church Hospital because there was so much back and forth movement, or whether the Mother Superior merely forgot to note the second sister's arrival.

In short, the Church Hospital's history is difficult to uncover

⁶⁵Rosemary Barbour contacted Courtney's next parish in New York. Their church archivist did not know if Courtney's paper still existed.

for several practical reasons. Had it actually been a branch house of the Sisters of Saint Margaret, had Bishop Courtney died in Nova Scotia rather than New York, or had the Mother Superior included more details in her diary entries in the 1890s, a more thorough account would be possible. On the other hand, it would have gone against the sisters' nature to receive public praise by noting the individual's work; there being only two sisters at any one time, any mention of them would have been quite specific.

The fact that so little information remains suggests two inferences. First, the sisters' stay may have been minimized so as not up upset certain members of the church. Thus the foray of Anglican Women Religious into Nova Scotia was quiet and unobtrusive in comparison both with Roman Catholic nuns in the province and with Anglican nuns outside the province. Secondly the lack of information surrounding the existence of the sisters and the hospital shows that archivists failed to foresee the importance of women's unwaged work and that historians failed to write about women's contributions overall, whether it be the housekeeping and child care a mother provide , or the work of women religious as nurses and teachers.

At the same time that newspaper reports were positive about the Anglican nuns' work at the Church Hospital, there were expressions by hospital promoters that anti-Catholic sentiment toward these women would not be tolerated. From this is may be gathered that there was some animosity toward the sisters. The general lack of support inevitably affected the Church Hospital and

forced it to close for economic reasons in 1893. The short length of the sisters's stay impeded their likelihood of being influential.



Sister Vera
c. 1895



Sister Paula
on her 91st birthday, 1948



Sister Amy
c. 1895



Sister Louise
c. 1895

Chapter 11
The Sisters of Saint John the Divine,
Springhill 1936-1949

The 1931 Census recorded the Town of Springhill, Nova Scotia as having a population of 6300. The main industry was coal-mining and the main employer was the Dominion Coal Co. Limited. These facts are not surprising as Springhill is probably best known for its three mine disasters. It was after the first 'bump' in 1891 that the need for a hospital in a town prone to industrial accidents was recognized and acted upon. The establishment of a hospital was pursued almost single-handedly by the Rector of the Anglican Parish of Springhill, Canon W.C.Wilson. Wilson appealed to his friends in New England for economic support in the name of a Church Hospital, which would serve all denominations. He gathered a substantial endowment of \$40,000, which had grown to \$251 000 by the 1930s, and arranged for the incorporation of the Church Cottage Hospital by an Act passed in the Legislature in 1893. Canon Wilson, with the help of his wife, served as superintendent of the hospital. Two large wards, six private

rooms, and a maternity wing were soon added to the original seven-bed hospital which later was known as All Saints'. When Wilson died in 1921, the hospital was administered by a board of directors.¹

In the next fifteen years it became of increasing concern to some Anglicans that the hospital was veering too far from the founder's objective that it function as a Christian institution, and a reevaluation resulted. In 1935 the Rev. George Harrison, Rector of Springhill, wrote a "Statement of Opinion re All Saints' Hospital" affirming the legitimacy of diocesan control.² Harrison's most specific anxiety was that the day-to-day running of the hospital, the policy and decision making, were the responsibility of the Superintendent, and Chairman and Treasurer of the Board of Directors, none of whom were necessarily Anglican.

By the 1930s, this contradiction between the original objective and the actual operation was clear. What was unclear was its significance to the users of the hospital, the residents of Springhill and surrounding area. Most undoubtedly felt that the hospital belonged to the town and thus did not require any church involvement. Nevertheless, Harrison fought for assurances that the Hospital, the oldest Church Hospital in the Dominion, would be

¹"Memorandum re All Saints' Hospital, Springhill," n.d. [1935-37]. Anglican Diocesan Archives of Nova Scotia [ADANS] MG 1 "1" #7 v.7, file 8. Wilson's son was Chair of the Board of Directors after his father died, but he did not reside in Springhill and never had the influence that his father did.

²George Harrison, "Statement of Opinion re All Saints' Hospital". ADANS MG 1 "1" #7 v.7, file 8.

managed in a more Anglican or at least Christian way.³ He made a formal suggestion to the Bishop to obtain the services of a nursing sisterhood which would 'gradually take over the operation of the hospital', including the handling of the income of the endowment. Perhaps because All Saints' Hospital was considered the only structured form of social work managed by the Anglican Church, the Diocese acted quickly on Harrison's recommendations and approached the Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine (SSJD), the only Canadian-founded Anglican Women's Order.

The SSJD was at the highest point in its history since its founding in 1884. With approximately seventy members and ten branch houses, along with the Motherhouse in Toronto, the congregation was prosperous, optimistic, and anxious to make a foray into the Diocese of Nova Scotia.⁴ In April 1936 the Mother Superior and one sister met the Bishop and inspected All Saints' Hospital.⁵ Their visit was followed by several letters exchanged by the Diocese and the sisterhood, which outlined stipulations and guidelines if the sisters were to take over the management positions of the hospital. Finally, after much negotiation, on 01 October 1936, the supervision of the hospital -although it would still be governed by a Board of Directors- came under the management of a sister and two assistant sisters from the

³Saint John's Messenger (Toronto: Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine [SSJD]) 38:[4] 1936 p.23.

⁴Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine (SSJD), 1884-1984 (St. John's Convent: Toronto, 1984) 32-56.

⁵Springhill Record 23 April 1936 p.1.

Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine.⁶

The three sisters chosen to go to Springhill were Sister Anna, Sister Thelma, and Sister Lucina. Three was the minimum number the Reverend Mother would consider sending to a branch house, in view of the need for religious life to be maintained in the context of community. Each selected sister had a distinct role to fulfil in the new branch house. Recent studies of women in religious life have emphasized the ability of women in religious orders to define and delegate authority and jobs within the community. Without seeking assistance outside the community, quality administration with successful divisions of labour are usually attained.⁷ These management skills were typified in Springhill where roles were conscientiously assigned and upheld among Sisters Anna, Thelma, and Lucina.

Sister Anna was born in 1892 and entered the SSJD at the age of twenty-eight.⁸ She graduated from the sisterhood's own nursing school, which opened in 1903 on Major Street in Toronto.⁹ Before going to Springhill she had been Novice Mistress, a job considered

⁶During the twelve year stay Sister Ethel and Novice Evelyn each came to Springhill for a brief time to replace one of the 'regular' Sisters, but there were never more than three Sisters working in Springhill at one time.

⁷A former pupil of Mount Saint Vincent Academy said she has often heard people say that corporate business people could learn a great deal about administration from Motherhouse administrative staff.

⁸Any statistical information on the three Springhill sisters was obtained from the Motherhouse Archives, Willowdale Ontario.

⁹Oral Interview with Sister Vera, SSJD, 28 May 1991, Saint John's Convent, Willowdale.

third in line in Convent hierarchy, next to the Mother Superior and Assistant Mother Superior. Sister Anna was strict and critical of her Novices. She was described by one of her former Novices as tenacious, "with a grasp like a bull dog. When she thought something needed to be done, she would move heaven and earth to have it done."¹⁰ Sister Anna was not a stereotypical, outwardly pious nun. Her administrative traits were far more noticeable than her spirituality. As a Sister noted, "Sister Anna was so overwhelmed with administration that I was not very impressed with her spiritual component."¹¹ Sister Anna was also known in the community for her frugality; she would put butter in skim milk to simulate cream, and she insisted that the Sisters make their own bread. She was also fond of long walks and boating. In general, she was regarded as being adventurous in all her assignments.¹²

Sister Anna clearly had strong personality traits that would make her a strict, efficient administrator. Combined with this, her next appointment after being Novice Mistress would have had to be of equal, or close to equal, responsibility so as to not denote the Mother Superior's dissatisfaction with previous performance. Thus, of the three Sisters, Sister Anna was chosen to be the Superintendent of the Hospital.

Sister Thelma was born in 1895. Like Sister Anna, she entered

¹⁰Oral Interview with Sister Constance, SSJD, 27 May 1991. Saint John's Convent, Willowdale.

¹¹Sister Constance.

¹²Sister Constance.

at the age of twenty-eight. In contrast, to Sister Anna, "Sister Thelma was large in stature, rosy-cheeked, and laughed a lot." A slightly younger sister remembers Sister Thelma as "being great fun" at the community's summer cottage in Port Hope.¹³ Sister Thelma had a great deal of relevant nursing experience that she could use in Springhill. She had worked in Vernon, British Columbia, at a Red Cross Hospital Outpost that primarily served patients from lumbering accidents and thus had experience that would be useful in an industrial town.

Sister Thelma was not outgoing, but she was very capable and organized. After being in Springhill, she served for several years as the community bursar, a job that included accounting, budgeting, and other fiscal duties. Sister Thelma also "had a high spiritual component". For many years she taught Sunday School and trained other teachers. The skills of high quality nursing and teaching as well as characteristics of organization, pleasantness, and an aura of spirituality made Sister Thelma well equipped to work at All Saints' Springhill Hospital and to teach in the nurses' training school.¹⁴

Sister Lucina was the third sister sent to Springhill in 1936. Born in 1873 and entering the SSJD at the age of thirty-five, she was a very sweet older Sister who was undoubtedly chosen to represent the traditional way of life in the small new community in

¹³Oral Interview with Sister Aquila, SSJD, 29 May 1991, Willowdale, Ontario. Sister Aquila was Mother Superior from 1945-1970.

¹⁴Sister Vera and Sister Constance.

Springhill. A younger sister speculated on Sister Lucina's assignment to Springhill: "she was probably sent to Springhill to bring a measure of the old regime and a sense of maturity. She could easily fit in. Could help keep peace"¹⁵ In the context of these three Springhill sisters as a family, Sister Lucina would have represented the small-town mother. As the only sister without a formal job, she became a housekeeper for the branch house and took the greatest responsibility in community and parish work. Sister Lucina was congenial and, apparently, a favourite of the Mother Superior. In Springhill Sister Lucina could complement Sister Anna's businesslike manner, and Sister Thelma's shyness.

It is difficult to separate the activities of each Sister while in Springhill. Reports sent to the Motherhouse from Springhill were very general and rarely specified the labour of individual sisters. Whatever the case, the sisters' work had significant influence on the Hospital, the Nurses' Training School, the Parish, and the Town of Springhill in general.

All Saints' Hospital was an active small town hospital that served a large area. Patients came from as far away as forty-five miles because there was only one other hospital in Cumberland County and hospitals in adjoining counties were far from the county line. Accommodating fifty patients, the hospital handled cases from mining accidents to pregnancies. A report in the Saint John's Messenger gives the following summary of the work in Springhill:

¹⁵Sister Constance.

There are such various accident cases brought in. Miners with crushed limbs or bodies, people injured in motor accidents, or with broken limbs; children badly burned or injured by falls. Then there are all the various illnesses to which people are subject. . . .¹⁶

The limited size of the hospital, however, hampered the work of the staff of five doctors, six graduate nurses, one dietitian thirteen student nurses, six maids, and six "men".¹⁷ The number of patients a day was often over fifty, which meant overcrowding the wards. The sisters noted in February of 1937 that, ". . .for the most part of the month, in a ward supposed to have seven to eight beds, eleven beds occupied, the majority of these were accident cases, and in the six-bed ward we had eight beds- need anything be said about accommodation?"¹⁸ Combined with the overcrowding, the sisters also endured understaffing. Even in 1946 the sisters reported averaging ten to eleven patients per nurse during the day and twenty per nurse at night. Sometimes they had too few maids and no cook.¹⁹ They were obviously working under very trying conditions.

Sister Anna, as superintendent, was in charge of the daily operation of the hospital in areas such as finance, the delegation of duties to employees, and communication with other hospitals,

¹⁶Saint John's Messenger 20:1 (1938).

¹⁷Report to General Chapter from All Saints's Springhill Hospital, 1938. St. John's Convent Archives, Willowdale. "Memorandum re All Saints' Hospital".

¹⁸Saint John's Messenger 19:1 (1937) 3.

¹⁹ Report to General Chapter, 1946. Saint John's Messenger (Fall 1943) 22.

provincial health authorities, and the bishop. She was responsible for the appointment and engagement of all employees except medical staff, as well as recommending necessary repairs and improvements to the Board of Directors.²⁰ In purchasing and other matters of particular importance which allowed adequate time, the Board of Directors was consulted and gave Sister Anna instructions on how to proceed. In 1938 Sisters Anna and Thelma were voted members of the Board, and thus their influence on the hospital increased. In surveying the monthly minutes of the hospital in the years the sisters were managers, there is a noticeable trend. As the years passed, the Board gave the sisters more opportunity to exert their personal judgement regarding hospital matters. In the first few years there were several notices that matters would be further investigated through consultation with the sisters. Later notices in the minutes were more likely to read that Sisters Anna and Thelma were given permission to make a decision, usually regarding purchasing equipment or supplies as long as it was within a certain amount of money. The following excerpt is indicative of many similar situations pertaining to the sisters:

Sister Thelma spoke of the need for a new refrigerator. . . . It was moved . . . seconded . . . that the Sisters be empowered to buy a refrigerator suitable for the purposes required.²¹

This passage, along with numerous others, suggests a relationship

²⁰"Memorandum of Agreement" (between All Saints' Hospital, Bishop Hackenley and the Sisterhood) 01 September 1936. ADANS MG 1 "1" #7 v.7, file 8.

²¹ Minutes: All Saints' Springhill Hospital, 24 August 1939.

of trust between the sisters and the Board.

Sisters Anna and Thelma were also on the teaching staff of All Saints' Nursing School, which opened the same year as the hospital, in 1893. After 1930, the course was two and a half years long, followed by six months nursing experience. The sisters each taught one to four courses a year, on a variety of subjects, from sterilization to anatomy. Sister Thelma taught more courses, perhaps because she was less occupied by administrative duties. During the sisters' stay, thirty-nine women graduated from the nursing program, which ended in 1948.²²

Although the hospital was obviously the sisters' primary concern while in Springhill, they were not narrow in their outlook and as early as 1937 they indicated an interest in parish work. In the 1937 report to General Chapter the sisters wrote, "In addition to hospital work we are doing a certain amount of parish work. We try to identify ourselves with parish interests as far as time and energy allow."²³

The main surviving evidence of structured Parish work undertaken by the sisters while in Springhill involved Sister Lucina. She had a Sunday School class by 1941 and later served as superintendent.²⁴ Sister Lucina also started a Communicants' Guild

²²All Saints' Springhill Hospital, Nursing School Registers. Refer to the last page of this chapter for a photograph of the sisters at a graduation.

²³Report to General Chapter, 1937.

²⁴It is possible that Sister Lucina was a Sunday School teacher before 1941 and it is also likely that she was the unofficial superintendent for many years as the official superintendent was

in the parish. The guild met monthly in the hospital chapel. Its activities probably included the preparation of confirmands. Sister Lucina held Evensong in the Hospital Chapel on Sunday and said nightly prayers in the children's ward.²⁵ She also did much parish visiting. In particular she called on the homes of godchildren and children from the Sunday School.²⁶ Records of Parish work done by other Springhill Sisters are almost non-existent. In Easter 1937, Sister Anna directed the choir of All Saints' Church, but there is no other mention of her helping with the parish any other year.²⁷ Similarly, there is no record of Sister Thelma being involved in parish committees or guilds.

A further significant area of the Sisters' influence may be included in their parish work. This was the numerous times the sisters were godparents. Combined, the sisters had over three hundred godchildren. Perhaps because she was less involved in the administration of the hospital, Sister Lucina was a godparent the most often, having two hundred eighty-three godchildren. Sister Thelma was a godparent ninety-two times and Sister Anna had sixty-two godchildren. Sister Ethel, who was in Springhill for a year replacing Sister Lucinda while she was ill, had twelve godchildren from September 1944 to July 1945. In eighty-one cases there were at least two sisters acting as godparents to one child and in ten

the Rector who may have been acting in a figurehead position.

²⁵Report to General Chapter, 1943.

²⁶Report to General Chapter, 1941.

²⁷Springhill Record 01 April 1937 "Easter at All Saints'" p.6.

instances there were three sisters who were godparents to the same child.²⁸

It is difficult to assess the implications of the sisters' role as godparents. Baptismal records give very limited information, and there is no mention in the sisters' reports to the Motherhouse concerning their positions as godparents. It may be assumed that the sisters took their vows as godparents seriously, attempting to ensure these children were brought up to know Christianity and to be confirmed as adolescents. Although the sisters referred to visiting their godchildren, and they undoubtedly prayed for them, it is not realistic to believe they maintained close contact with over three hundred children baptized in a twelve-year period. Nevertheless in being godparents, the sisters showed their compassion for the young and for spreading the faith. It also gave the sisters the opportunity to know more people on a personal level when they visited the homes of Springhill families.

While in Springhill, the SSJD undoubtedly exerted numerous intangible influences on the parish as well as on the town itself. In their full length grey habits that included wimples, headgear which went from eyebrows to chin, the sisters were very noticeable. Any time they went anywhere, whether it be to Church on Sunday, parish visiting, or travelling to attend meetings in Halifax, the

²⁸All of these baptismal figures were obtained from the All Saints' Anglican Church Parish Records. Because these documents are confidential, they were compiled with the assistance of Father Langley MacLean, the Rector, on 05 June 1991.

sisters would be highly visible. As such, their presence inevitably had an influence on the town.²⁹ At the very least, they demonstrated the catholic side of Anglicanism to Springhill residents.

Within Anglican circles there was -and there continues to be- a wide variance of opinion on the usefulness and appropriateness of Anglican Women's Religious Orders. Some think it threatens Anglicanism because it is too close to Roman tradition and thus should be curtailed. In a denomination that encompasses significant differences of opinion on the issue of religious congregations, one may acknowledge the controversy it creates in secular society.³⁰

Another influence the sisters had on the town was in social work. The hospital was neither municipal nor provincial, and so its services were at the discretion and cost of the Diocese of Nova Scotia. There were, of course, fees charged for treatment and care received in the hospital, but many patients either could not or would not pay their bills. Thus, while the sisters ran the hospital from 1936 to 1949, they assumed responsibility for these costs. Some of the patients in the hospital would have gone into

²⁹The idea of Religious as a 'presence' should not be underestimated. In fact, the purpose the Bishop outlined to the Anglican Sisters who went to Digby, N.S. in 1979 was solely to be a presence.

³⁰Again in reference to the Sisters in Digby, we know that Religious are not always accepted by the community in which they go to live. Sister Bonnie was spat on one day as she walked along a street in Digby. As well these Sisters have had numerous unpleasant receptions including criticism from ministers from other denominations.

a foster home, group home, or geriatric nursing facility, had such institutions been available at an affordable cost. Over the years the sisters "never turned anyone away". Those they accepted for long term care included a baby, a teen-aged woman, two middle-aged women, and a teen-aged boy.

"Lynn" was a baby who never left the hospital. Because her mother died giving birth, the sisters decided to adopt the girl. Lynn lived with the sisters in the third floor of the hospital and later in a house the sisters obtained. Sister Lucina looked after her most of the time, and could often be seen chasing the child through the corridors of the hospital. In 1949 when she was about ten years old, Lynn went back to Toronto with the sisters. According to a former nurse at the hospital, Lynn later married in Toronto and had two children. It is generally believed in Springhill that the sisters intended that Lynn should become a nun.³¹

The sisters were asked by the Church to care for an older woman from Halifax who had trouble coping. "Lottie" came to live with the sisters in the mid part of the sisters' stay in Springhill. She lived with the sisters in the hospital and was assigned a few chores, one of which was getting the mail. Laura Coleman, a student nurse in residence while Lottie lived there, said many saw Lottie as a sad charity case. Coleman described Lottie's behaviour in the following excerpt:

³¹Several people with whom I spoke knew of Lynn, but all of the above specific information regarding Lynn was obtained through an oral interview with Mrs. Laura Coleman in Springhill 06 June 1991.

She could not cope. She sewed long sleeves onto her short sleeves and high necks on her blouses and dresses. She did not bathe in the winter. The R.N.'s chipped in and bought her overshoes for the winter.³²

It seems that the sisters may have offered Lottie the security for which she longed.

"French Mag" was another woman the sisters cared for in a long-term arrangement. One of the doctors brought her in because no other hospital or nursing home would take her. She lived on the border between Cumberland and Colchester Counties, so each district passed her off on the other, knowing that she could not afford to pay her bills. This woman lived in a hospital ward but was under the care of the sisters.

The only male whom the sisters accepted for care was "Herbie". He grew up in the hospital and was a helper to the Sisters with the canteen, elevator, and cow milking. According to Laura Coleman, Herbie's bed was on one of the wards. Of course he could not live in the sisters' quarters. In fact, it seems quite progressive of the sisters to care for this young boy on a long-term basis. Herbie left the hospital in 1946, once he had reached his teens. Herbie is about sixty-five now, and still lives in Springhill.

The sisters responded to the needs of the residents of Springhill. The town had few mental and physical health care resources and the sisters seemed to do all they could to stretch their work to encompass those who needed them. While many myths maintain that nuns are inflexible because of their structured lives

³²Mrs. Coleman.

of prayer,³³ this example of the adaptability of the Springhill sisters exemplifies their intuitiveness and responsiveness. It also is indicative of their self-sacrificing ways; many of the people who came to the sisters could not offer economic enumeration for the care they received, yet the sisters never refused them. In fact, according to one priest, "the sisters often went without food so that others could eat."³⁴

Most Religious Orders agree that it is improper to set up a mission or a branch house of their own accord. Rather, they believe they should be invited, usually by a bishop. When an invitation is directed to a community, the Religious know they have at least a certain amount of support from people who understand the situation. Nevertheless, upon being invited, a religious order does not merely borrow the invitee's agenda of plans for the area; the order has its own set of motivations, goals, and expectations. The Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine had four areas of particular interest in going to All Saints' Springhill Hospital: the upgrading of the hospital, fulfilment of the order's aspirations in social work, the maintenance of the spiritual lives of the patients, and the spiritual well-being of the sisters themselves.

In fulfilling the aspirations of their community, the sisters had specific goals. First, Springhill presented an opportunity to

³³Suzanne Campbell-Jones has even compared the lives of some nuns to workers in Nazi German labour camps because they are both so highly structured and bound to schedules. Campbell-Jones 95.

³⁴Father Langley MacLean, 05 June 1991.

expand the work of the community farther into Eastern Canada. Previously the farthest east that the sisters had a branch house was in Montreal at Saint Michael's Mission. Incidentally, the same year the sisters came to Springhill, they also ventured farther west than they had been, to open a house for single mothers in Edmonton.³⁵ The sisters undoubtedly had other concerns than covering the map, and yet having a multi-province basis of work and influence was, clearly, more desirable to them than limiting themselves to Ontario. Combined with the geographic attraction of the province, the Diocese of Nova Scotia also had an active history of missionary work starting with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in 1738.³⁶ Lastly, the hospital itself was the oldest Church Hospital in the Dominion.³⁷ In short, Springhill gave an opening to the sisters to offer their ministry in a diocese with a long history and a reputation of responsive effective ministry; it was thus a diocese in which success would be probable.

With regard to the type of work the sisters were asked to do, several more attractions were evident. Although the sisterhood had various undertakings- including day schools, residential schools, Sunday School by Post, and homes for single mothers- hospital work was their speciality. The SSJD began their formal health care work at the Military Hospital in Moose Jaw during the Northwest

³⁵SSJD 1884-1894 38-41.

³⁶ Millman and Kelley, Atlantic Canada to 1900: A History of the Anglican Church (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1983) 29.

³⁷Saint John's Messenger 38:[4] 1936, 23.

Rebellion. After returning to Toronto in 1885 the sisters began work in Saint John's Hospital, where in the first three years there were 465 patients, 259 of them non-paying.³⁸ Thus the opportunity in Springhill to undertake hospital management was especially attractive to the Order. In reference to All Saints' Hospital, Springhill, The Saint John's Messenger noted in 1936 that "hospital work provides a great opportunity for service in itself and opens so many other avenues"³⁹ Sister Anna, the superintendent of All Saints', explained in an early report of her work that health care was a natural and appropriate form of missionary action: "In foreign mission fields a Dispensary or a hospital is often one of the first pieces of work undertaken- it is not a less important piece of mission work in our own country."⁴⁰ It is clear that the Sisters of Saint John the Divine saw the double advantage of a hospital, caring for patients physical and spiritual needs. It was similarly a paramount concern of the Reverend George Harrison as well as the founder of the hospital, Canon Wilson, that Christians should undertake society's health care responsibilities. Thus the ideology of the sisters and the original aims of All Saints' were a perfect match.

Sister Anna equated nursing with a vocation in the same way

³⁸SSJD 1884-1984 20.

³⁹Saint John's Messenger 38:3 (1936) 24.

⁴⁰Saint John's Messenger 19:1 (1937) 13. Note that it is not that much of a coincidence that Sister Anna loosely equated Springhill with 'a foreign mission field' as she indicates many times that Springhill is rather uncivilized in the degree of Christianity that is practised.

that one might have a calling to the vocation of a Religious Life. In 1946 she directed a challenge to Associates of the Order, suggesting that they teach that nursing is definitely a vocation, "a vocation given by God".⁴¹ Sister Anna noted that vocations should not be limited to a call to the priesthood or Religious Life and that there should, instead, be a wider application that includes health care. The hospital, and especially the training school, in Springhill provided the SSJD with an opportunity to train and convince lay people of the sanctity of a nursing career. The value in such a forum was obviously a preeminent concern to the Sisterhood. Although the sisters saw their physical labour and spiritual guidance in the work of the hospital as being synergistic, the two may be separated to outline the sisters' work.

As superintendent and assistant superintendent, Sisters Anna and Thelma had a major influence on the day-to-day management of the hospital, while their membership on the Board of Directors had an impact on the long term direction of the hospital. The sisters demonstrated their ideology of hospital care through the fulfilment of their roles in these two areas.

Soon after coming to the hospital, the sisters wrote to their order regarding the poor conditions in which their staff worked. Overcrowding, understaffing, an old poorly planned building, and a lack of provincial funding were the principal hindrances to

⁴¹Report to General Chapter, 1946.

providing the best possible quality of care.⁴² The sisters immediately tackled these concerns, by beginning to clear the hospital debt and make plans for a larger, more modern hospital.⁴³

Heightened spirituality in the patients was as important to the sisters as physical improvement. Once in the hospital, the patients could be influenced more readily than could town residents at large. The sisters also attempted to encourage staff to attend services in the hospital chapel. Prayers were held every morning for the nurses and Holy Eucharist was celebrated twice a week. These services were poorly attended, but the fact that the sisters kept up the practice shows that they were consistent in providing an environment conducive to worship. A more specific practice of the sisters showed their strong views on the necessity of baptism. Sister Anna's 1939 Report of All Saints' Springhill Hospital to General Chapter noted that "fairly frequently we have a baptism in chapel, usually just before the mother and baby go home." It is very difficult to discern whether the sisters encouraged indiscriminate baptising (the baptising of children whose parents are uncommitted to the Church), although judging by the high numbers it seems probable that they did. Because Anglicans believe people's souls may not go to heaven, even innocent babies, if not baptized, the sisters may have taken it upon themselves to baptise those children whose parents would probably not have bothered. The

⁴²Report to General Chapter from All Saints' Springhill, 1938 and 1942.

⁴³Saint John's Messenger 20:1 (Spring 1938).

sisters probably considered this the only responsible action. Had they not organized such baptisms, the sisters might have considered themselves negligent in their Christian duty.

The last principal motivation of the sisters in going to Springhill was to further the fulfilment of their own spiritual vows. The Rule of Life for each SSJD is to live a life of community and prayer. Community life includes living and cooperating with other sisters. Springhill presented an opportunity for enough sisters, three, to maintain a community; two could work in the hospital while the other could spend part of her time acting as household manager. They could spend time together at meals, recreation and in discussing matters of the community. The prayer part of their lives could also be achieved individually as well as with the cooperation of the bishop and the chaplain whom the bishop would assign to the sisters.

In agreeing to serve in a new place the sisters undoubtedly considered whether they could obtain and maintain forms of prayer and worship similar to that in the Motherhouse and other branch houses and did not agree to go to Springhill in 1936 until this had been ensured. Other inducing features of geography, acceptance by the people and appropriateness of a hospital combined to motivate the sisters to go to Springhill.

This paper aims to avoid perpetuating the common stereotypes about nuns as well as the notion that there was a lack of criticism and opposition to them because of their devotion. In general, individuals and institutions usually appreciated two things in

particular about nuns: that they did not have to be paid and that they had respectable, honest, and dependable work records.⁴⁴ However, the Springhill sisters endured numerous forms of overt and covert antagonism to their work. This stemmed predominantly from the Bishop, the Rector of the parish, the Board of Directors of the Hospital, and various Springhill citizens.

The Bishop of Nova Scotia during most of the sisters' stay in Springhill was Archbishop John Hackenley, who was Bishop of the Diocese from 1934 to 1943. Upon the advice of Harrison, the Parish Rector from 1921 to 1937, this Bishop arranged for the Sisters of Saint John the Divine to come to Springhill. Although he had an ongoing and apparently congenial relationship with the sisters, Archbishop Hackenley could have done more to encourage the Sisters' contentment as well to ensure that they had the best possible environment in which to fulfil their various duties. The most obvious situation for which the Archbishop must take responsibility is in his choice of Chaplain for the sisters. This is an extremely important figure in the lives of Religious because this priest celebrates Holy Communion for them often, as well as hearing their confessions and offering guidance.

In a rural area the chaplain assigned to the religious community, usually the parish priest, is often the only person in the area qualified to minister to them. This was especially true in the period before dependable transportation, as Religious could

⁴⁴Anyone who has taken life vows of poverty, chastity, and especially, obedience is likely to be a good, faithful employee.

not readily travel to find satisfactory ministry. With specific reference to Springhill, the rector's position on the Hospital Board gave an opportunity to serve as a conciliatory link between the Diocese, the sisters, and the Town. As a town resident and representative of the Diocese, Harrison worked well in this capacity but his successor was less capable. After a breakdown in communication with the sisters, the second rector could not pull the Diocese and the Hospital Board together. The final area in which the rector of Springhill, in the role as Chaplain to the three SSJD's, held the balance of power was simply as being a male priest ministering to a female religious community. This arrangement represented the engrained subordination of women to men in the context of the church. At the time the sisters were in Springhill, church power was exclusively male, a state pointless to contest. Had the members of the community been of the same sex as the chaplain, there might have been less risk of strain or imbalance of power. This was a potential problem for every female religious order because there were no female priests in the Anglican Church in Canada until 30 November 1976.

Harrison, as rector when the sisters first came to Springhill, was a sympathetic supporter of the Religious Life. He welcomed the SSJD to Springhill and attended consistently to their spiritual needs, giving them Holy Communion daily and doing everything possible to serve them.⁴⁵ Harrison left in 1937 and was replaced

⁴⁵Letter from Mother Dora to Archbishop Hackenley 13 August 1941. ADANS MG 1 "1" #7 v.7, file 8.

by Canon W.M. Knickle, a man whom the sisters felt was unsuited to be their chaplain. In a letter to the Archbishop dated 13 August 1941 Mother Dora notes her concern over the sisters' poor spiritual care. She writes, "we are quite disturbed over the fact that our sisters are not being able to live up to the requirements of the Rule of Life." ⁴⁶ Remembering that this Rule was central to their lives and also that they were bound to it by community vows, this was extremely serious. Mother Dora continued in her letter, and threatened to remove the sisters if their spiritual provisions were not met.

After the Archbishop apologized, saying he would talk to Canon Knickle, nothing of their conversation materialized. Mother Dora wrote a more serious letter to the Archbishop in 1942. She noted that her complaint was still necessary because it "touches the maintenance of the Religious Life to which we are pledged as our first duty. She was specific in her reproach, writing:

Father Knickle has told the Sisters quite frankly that he does not care about his ministrations to them nor does he like them. Last year he went away for a month making no provisions for the sacramental ministrations for the Parish or the Sisters, and he is planning to do the same this year....⁴⁷

Other concerns were numerous Mother Dora noted, but she would wait to see the Archbishop to tell him. She requested a replacement as chaplain, perhaps a priest from a nearby parish. Immediately the Archbishop responded to this in a seemingly sensitive and efficient

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

manner by intimating that he might request that Knickle move. In the Archbishop's own words, "it is possible I may be offering Mr. Knickle a change of parish within a reasonable time. If this change should take place, the priest I have in mind for Springhill is not only competent to care for the spiritual life of the Sisters, but he will appreciate the privilege of ministering to their needs."⁴⁸

This excerpt is from a letter dated 25 August 1942. Canon Knickle did not move until 1967, after being in the parish a total of thirty years. It is a bishop's responsibility to remove a priest from a parish if he fails to fulfil his duties. As evidenced by the Reverend Mother's complaints as well as the serious consideration given by the bishop to moving the Rector, Canon Knickle was not being responsible in completing the tasks to which he was assigned. Because Archbishop Hackenley and his successor Bishop Kingston were aware of Canon Knickle's failings regarding the sisters' spiritual care, the two bishops must be held partly liable for the lack of cooperation the sisters had to endure from Knickle.

Regarding the resentment the Board of Directors and various citizens showed the sisters, two details should be mentioned. First, many of the residents of Springhill including some of the members of the Board of Directors, were uncomfortable with the role of the Anglican Church in the hospital. What the Anglican Church

⁴⁸Letter to Mother Dora from Archbishop Hackenley 25 August 1942. ADANS MG 1 "1" #7 v.7, file 8.

may have viewed as action toward social work responsibility, some residents saw as unnecessary intervention. The guidelines stipulated that the majority of the eleven Board members must be Anglican, that the Bishop choose three members, and after consultation with the board, he also choose the Chair. The Bishop was to serve on the Board and have complete veto power.⁴⁹

Along with this political control over the hospital, the Anglican Church also maintained substantial financial control over the hospital's endowment. According to the Diocese, the endowment, which amounted to approximately \$10,000 annually in the 1930s and 1940s, was their property. Thus if the Church either chose, or was forced, to withdraw from the hospital, the endowment would go back into the Diocese's coffers. By 1943 numerous articles in the Springhill Record had argued convincingly that the founder, Canon Wilson, intended for the ownership of the endowment to remain with the hospital. The Church, on the other hand, did not think the Hospital should have the money if it was going to be run secularly rather than as a Church Hospital. The potential for conflict was clear. The citizens undoubtedly equated the sisters with the Diocese and thus the sisters -unjustly- received much of the blame and jealousy the residents understandably felt.

A second consideration is that the Diocese did not force the sisters upon Springhill without considering the appropriateness of having Anglican Sisters in the Town. According to the

⁴⁹Bylaws of All Saints' Springhill Hospital Corporation (29 March 1935). ADANS MG 1 "1" #7 v.[5].

correspondence between the Archbishop and the Reverend George Harrison, the latter asked numerous Springhill residents how they thought the management of the hospital by a sisterhood would be viewed. Harrison noted that two citizens with whom he concurred believed that everyone in the town would appreciate any change of management. He also mentioned, realistically, that opposition was probable from the majority of the Board of Directors, but that it could be defeated.⁵⁰

The actual obstructiveness from the Board was more serious than Harrison anticipated. The sisters were not presented with an accurate list of finances and the Board members were apparently buying up bonds to ensure their financial control.⁵¹ Once the sisters arrived in Springhill, opposition to them was evident. In particular, there was one doctor and one member of the Board of Directors who wanted to oust the sisters. According to a letter from Harrison to the Bishop, a member of the Board bribed a male employee of the hospital to make as much trouble as possible for the sisters. The employee confessed to being paid by the board member after Sister Anna told him she would have to let him go due to his drunkenness at work. Harrison reported to the Archbishop about how this opposition was affecting Sister Anna:

. . .this long strain on her, as I said before[,] will break under it I am afraid unless things are made secure for them. She is showing it- and I am worried. No

⁵⁰Letter to Archbishop Hackenley from Rev. George Harrison 17 March 1936. ADANS MG 1 "1" #7 v.8, file 5.

⁵¹Ibid

woman, no matter how self-sacrificing, could stand it.⁵²

The opposition the sisters faced is indicative of many things. In particular, it implies that many in the Diocese as well as the Town of Springhill, were not yet ready to accept the existence of Anglican sisterhoods in Nova Scotia. Although they may have seen the economic and spiritual value in such religious orders, many people were not sufficiently comfortable with the idea of Anglican sisterhoods to support them in practice.

For an example of the lack of total cooperation concerning sisterhoods, consider that Archbishop Hackenley's correspondence with the sisters was frequent as well as friendly. However, by failing to secure a suitable chaplain for the sisters, the Archbishop was unsupportive. The sisters were subjected to a stressful hospital situation which was complicated by the difficulty of administering an endowment. The Archbishop may have aspired to maintain a distance from the controversy and thus from the sisters who would have become known as tight, critical managers.

The Archbishop who was in office for the latter part of the sisters' stay in Springhill was also vague in his support of sisterhoods. In particular, in 1946, Archbishop Kingston expressed his anxiety for the lack of vocations in the province. However, he referred specifically to male vocations. An example of his exclusiveness may be noted in Kingston's sixth point of his "Ten

⁵²Letter to Archbishop Hackenley from Rev. George Harrison 26 February 1936, p.2. ADANS MG 1 "1" #7 v.7, file 8.

Point Program" as written in the Diocesan Year Book in 1946.

It is gratifying to meet so many boys and girls who think in serious terms concerning their vocation. A fair number of boys and girls seem to be thinking of full time service in the Church. The challenge of the Ministry needs to go out to our best boys for nowhere are there greater opportunities for leadership and influence than in the Ministry of the Church of God.⁵³

The Bishop's lack of concern for finding an avenue for women to fulfil a vocation is evident in this passage. It seems that 'girls' were included in the beginning of his plan, but then he had 'second thoughts' and realized that only men can have vocations. This passage is also typical of the Church's tendency to begin to delve into an area, but fail to follow it up, something particularly prevalent regarding women's roles in the church.

The 1930s and 1940s saw prolific numbers of Roman Catholic women enter religious orders. For example, the Sisters of Charity in Halifax received at least one hundred postulants annually throughout the 1940s.⁵⁴ This strongly suggests that conditions in the Anglican Church, might have been ripe for the expansion of Religious Orders at the same time. However, there is no evidence of any serious effort made on the part of Diocesan hierarchy to promote Anglican sisterhoods or to stimulate individual vocations. In their roles as Archbishop, both Hackenley and Kingston could have taken more active steps to encourage the development of sisterhoods and to preserve the community of the sisters in

⁵³Synod Journal 1946-47 p. 82.

⁵⁴Telephone Interview with Sister Mary Martin, SCH, 09 October 1991. For more statistical information on Roman Catholic nuns, see TABLE 3.

Springhill. Although these officials may not have been actively opposing sisterhoods or the Springhill Sisters in particular, their lack of action may be equated with a lack of support.

Similar to the Archbishops, Canon Knickle, as rector, did not oppose the sisters as much as he ignored them. Because of his position as the only person in the area able to minister to the sisters, in their most specific spiritual need of having Holy Communion celebrated frequently, Canon Knickle's lack of interest had acute repercussions. This was unarguably something of which Knickle must have been aware. There is no way of knowing why Canon Knickle could not appreciate and understand the sisters. However, there are several possibilities, from conflicting personalities to a feeling that the sisters were interfering with Knickle's work, that could explain why he was uncomfortable with the sisters.

Knowing that Sister Anna, in particular, took her responsibilities very seriously, was very strict, was exceptionally frugal, and considered Springhill a 'heathen' place, one might assume that she was capable of being rather abrupt and difficult to deal with. She may also have been irritated with Canon Knickle for loafing around the hospital as he apparently did everyday.⁵⁵ Because of the interaction of Knickle, as a member of the Board of Directors and Hospital Chaplain, with the hospital, there was certainly potential for disagreement between him and the sisters.

⁵⁵Oral Interview with Mrs Laura Coleman 06 June 1991, Springhill, N.S. She said Canon Knickle liked to 'hang around' the hospital and be sociable. Apparently this was often at meal time and other inopportune times.

Another situation which may have jeopardized the relationship between the sisters and their chaplain concerned their common work. When Knickle came to Springhill, the sisters, especially Sister Lucina, were doing some parish visiting. They may have been taking the initiative to do parish work that, technically, Knickle should have been organizing.

Also relevant to the lack of respect between Knickle and the sisters is a comparison of their vocations. Although being a priest is traditionally a respected position, one may still have a family, as Knickle did, and a reasonable amount of freedom in life. The religious life, on the other hand, involves life vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Therefore, some people consider the life of a Religious to be a higher calling. It is possible that Knickle may have compared himself with the sisters or felt that others compared him with them. It is worth noting that there is ample room for jealousy when a priest is forced to share a parish with sisters. Clearly a special, sympathetic priest who appreciates the Religious Life is necessary in this sort of situation to ensure that the priest does not work independently or even against the sisters.

Even before the sisters arrived in Springhill, there was opposition to their work. Understandably some people were worried that Springhill residents would lose their jobs and be replaced by the sisters. This was something that also concerned the sisters. The Mother Superior wrote to the Bishop expressing that she did not want anyone to become unemployed because of the sisters' arrival in

Springhill.⁵⁶ Although the Bishop told her she need not worry, the hospital minutes read that the matron tendered her resignation to take effect 30 September 1936, and that she was given three months salary in appreciation of her service.⁵⁷ Many residents, including Board members, resented the way in which the management of their hospital was being taken over by 'strangers' (and probably in particular, Upper Canadians). Unfortunately for the sisters, the tension only grew as the years passed. These pressures as well as the trend to more modern, standardized municipal hospitals combined to bring the Bishop in 1945 to recommend to the Board of Directors of All Saints' Hospital that it was the town's responsibility at that point to take over the hospital's management. In a special meeting of the Board of Directors of the hospital on 04 October 1945 Bishop Kingston made the following remarks:

Hospitalization is a necessary service which should be provided by the community. Time now when we, as a Board, should say to the Town of Springhill - we have served you well during these years and have been glad to do so and we now feel it is your responsibility to carry on the work.⁵⁸

The main reason that this recommendation was made was the necessity for expansion and renovation of the hospital in order to better serve the increasing number of patients. In particular, due to the industrialism of Springhill, a hospital capable of properly

⁵⁶Letter from Mother Dora to Archbishop Hackenley 28 April 1936. ADANS MG 1 "1" #7 v.7 file 8.

⁵⁷Minutes: All Saints' Hospital 01 October 1936. It is obvious from reading the minutes of 1936 that the Matron was fired to make room for the sisters.

⁵⁸All Saints' Hospital Minutes 14 October 1945 p.1.

serving accident victims was needed. Because the hospital endowment could not cover the cost overrun, and the Diocese was not willing to do fund-raising for this cause, the Church could not afford the undertaking of building a new hospital. A secondary reason for the Diocese's desire to withdraw from Springhill may have been in response to discontent expressed by many Springhill residents that they did not have control over their own hospital. Anglicanism was not the predominant religion in Springhill and the residents probably felt it discordant that Anglicans be responsible for the operation of the town's only hospital.⁵⁹

On 11 October 1945 the Board of All Saints' issued a Statement on behalf of their corporation announcing that the hospital was planning to expand from a fifty-four to between an eighty and a hundred bed facility. The statement mentioned that All Saints was the only general hospital in the province that was neither under provincial or municipal jurisdiction and that for the sake of the hospital's effectiveness, it should become the responsibility of the citizens of Springhill. The account continued by arguing that

⁵⁹Such discontent was often mentioned in editorials from the Springhill Record, beginning in late 1945. It was also remembered by several of the Springhill residents to whom I spoke in June, 1991. Father MacLean noted that for the past few years, the clergy are officially 'on call' at the hospital according to a schedule that avoids domination by any denomination. It is difficult to obtain the statistics for the number of people who considered themselves Anglican in Springhill. We do know from parish records that in the 1930s and 1940s, while the population of Springhill was over 6000, the average attendance at All Saints' Church was approximately one hundred for the main Sunday service. The number of residents of Cumberland County who declared themselves Anglican on the 1941 Census was 5364, or 13.6% of the population, by no measure near a majority of residents.

"To us, therefore, it seems logical that the public now so recognizes that general hospitals should be the responsibility of the public itself. As a municipal project, such a hospital would have far greater possibilities of service and can be a credit and source of pride to the Town and its citizens."⁶⁰ Of course when the hospital went under the control of the municipality, there was no further need of the sisters' services. The corporation could hire and pay its own staff. There does not appear to have been any effort to ask the sisters to stay. Their contract was terminated when the Mother Superior gave six months notice on 31 June 1948 to withdraw. The sisters could have been asked to leave on 31 December of the same year but agreed to stay until 31 March 1949. The chancellor of the diocese, R.V. Harris, said that the Board's resolution to terminate the sisters' contract "show(ed) that the majority was determined to wipe out every vestige of Church control."⁶¹

It seems that the sisters came to be equated with the diocese, albeit inaccurately. This makes it difficult to separate the possible distrust of the sisters from the intense resentment of some Board members to Diocesan control of the hospital. Nevertheless, the Sisters did not come out of their management position of All Saints' untarnished. That some information was

⁶⁰"Statement of All Saints' Hospital Corporation" included in Minutes Books of All Saints' Hospital.

⁶¹Minutes from the Annual Meeting of the Corporation and Board of Directors of All Saints' Springhill Hospital, 18 January 1949, p.7. The chancellor, a lawyer, monitors the legal affairs of the diocese and advises the bishop.

being withheld was indicated by the Reverend Mother's explanation for the discontinuing of the sisters' work in Springhill. She did not give the same reason that the hospital minutes stated, that the Sisters were leaving All Saints' Hospital because it was no longer under Diocesan control. Instead Mother Dora said that due to a lack of staff, the sisters were needed elsewhere. The Report of the Mother to the General Chapter in 1948 reads as follows:

Through the illness of some of our Sisters, the increasing age of others, and alas, even defections among us- we still find ourselves unable to supply the required Sisters for the work we have at hand. We have made the decision to withdraw from All Saints' Hospital We are allowing the Sisters there to stay until March 1949 at the latest.⁶²

This was obviously a sanitized report that appears to have been written to avoid embarrassment for someone. Perhaps Mother Aquila was protecting the reputation of the Diocese of Nova Scotia in hiding the fact that their work of 'charity' in Springhill was not unanimously well received by the town's residents. Or, she may have wanted to hide any information that would connect the congregation with a blemished hospital care performance. Whatever the reason for the Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine's official stand on leaving Springhill, it is worth noting that the Order considered the situation worth hiding from its members.

At the 1948 annual meeting of All Saints' Hospital, the motion to repeal the former bylaws was passed, seven to five. (The Archbishop, Reverend Wilson (the founder's son), Knickle, the

⁶²The Report of the Mother to the General Chapter 1948. Motherhouse Archives, Willowdale. Mother Dora was replaced by Mother Aquila in 1945.

Chancellor of the Diocese, and the Archdeacon of the region opposed the motion.) As written in the minutes:

The Archbishop stated . . . it is a matter of great magnitude to repeal the bylaws, and asked what was behind this. (A Board Member) replied, "It is aimed to strip you of your power."

An interpretation of the Deed of Trust of the endowment was then discussed:

The Archbishop stated that in his opinion hospitals today are primarily the business of towns and municipalities and not that of the Church. The Town could have the hospital if they wished, but not the endowment.⁶³

The management of the hospital came under a new committee composed of six board members, including Knickle. Eventually concessions between the Diocese and the Hospital Corporation were made that granted the hospital a portion of the endowment previously allotted to the hospital. Although the bishop lost much of the power he formerly held, he was still an honorary member of the board and was notified of any appointments or changes in the running of the hospital. Today the bishop still attends annual meetings of all Saints' Hospital and the institution still receives money from the endowment even though it is fully a provincial hospital.

The accomplishment of the SSJD in remaining in Springhill for twelve years should not be underestimated. There is ample evidence that the three sisters were adaptable and did everything possible to make the mission succeed. Considering the opposition they faced, it is admirable that they kept their contract for as long as

⁶³Minutes from the Annual Meeting, All Saints' Hospital, 18 January 1949.

they did.

It is obvious that the tensions within All Saints' Hospital may have made it an unsatisfactory testing ground for measuring the aptitude of a women's religious order in Nova Scotia. Conversely, there was so much deep-rooted resentment on the part of the residents of Springhill toward the Anglican Church's political and economic control over the Board, that the sisters' performance could not be judged impartially. In retrospect, there was a definite contradiction of authority. The Church justified its action in protecting the hospital on the basis of the founder's goals set in 1893.

The Springhill Hospital was a difficult arena for the sisters to show their skill. They had an almost impossible task in improving the standards of the hospital due to overcrowding, understaffing, and underfunding. Combined with this, they did not have the support of their rector. Nevertheless, perhaps due to Sister Anna's frugality, the Sisters managed to get the hospital out of debt and to obtain new equipment.⁶⁴ As well, the laying of the cornerstone for the hospital which opened in 1964 occurred during the Sisters' time in Springhill in 1944. This accomplishment should be partly attributed to the sisters.

Materially the sisters made progress. Whether the sisters' other goal -strengthening the place of the Church in the Town- was attained is impossible to discern. However, the existence of Anglican sisterhoods was more widely acknowledged in Nova Scotia

⁶⁴Personal interview, Sister Aquila, 29 May 1991.

because of the SSJD. In fact, it is interesting to note that one person who learned about Anglican nuns from meeting the sisters of Saint John the Divine was Leonard Hatfield, who was to serve as Bishop of the Diocese of Nova Scotia from 1979 to 1984. When she was in the province to visit Springhill, the Reverend Mother spoke about the Religious Life at King's College, and apparently influenced Hatfield. Although there were many years between the departure of the SSJD from Nova Scotia and the establishment of another community, it was under Hatfield that the Society of Our Lady, Saint Mary was established in Digby, Nova Scotia in 1979.

The significance of the mission work undertaken by the Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine in Springhill is varied. From the standpoint of the Diocese of Nova Scotia, it has relevance in determining why Anglican Women's religious orders failed to prosper or even be widely appreciated in Nova Scotia. The Diocese was still not ready to give adequate support to a women's religious community.

The photograph on the following page was taken at the graduation of All Saints' Nursing School [1943]. Front row, left to right: Sister Anna, Father Knickle, Archbishop Kingston, Mother Dora, Sister Thelma.



CHAPTER 111

The Society of Our Lady, Saint Mary

1979-1991

The Society of Our Lady, Saint Mary (SLSM) located in a rural community eight miles from Digby, Nova Scotia, began its life in 1979. After corresponding with Bishop Leonard Hatfield, Sister Bonnie Wright left Ontario to open a religious house, Bethany Place, in Rossway, Nova Scotia. The Bishop requested that she provide a religious presence in the area, with the understanding that she remain economically self-sufficient as is the historic tradition of religious orders.¹

The location may seem illogical for two reasons. Although Anglicanism is the third largest Christian denomination in Nova Scotia in terms of membership, the population of Digby County is predominantly Protestant fundamentalist or Roman Catholic. Secondly, Sister Bonnie was originally from Digby and her family still lived there; this sort of arrangement is usually avoided due

¹Personal interview with Sister Bonnie, 01-02 March 1991, Rossway, and Personal interview with Bishop Peters, 30 January, 1992, Halifax.

to the confidentiality and emotional intensity demanded of clergy and Religious who are heavily involved in social work. In other respects, however, Digby was a natural base. Sisters devoted to the active life try to go where they are most needed to fulfil social needs, many of which are evident in Digby County. The area is well known for its poor economy and high level of mental illness, a description of which is given in the following extract from a study of Digby County. Conducted in the 1950s, this study refers to a period in which Sister Bonnie grew up in the area:

It is more than just an isolated settlement in the forest land; it is a community bewitched, where time has been held back, where men often appear like little boys and boys as silent as old men Their manner shows no embarrassment and no excuse for the debris and poverty scattered around, the rickety table with bits of food, the walls hung with sooted old prints and calendars of lost years.²

It is difficult to discern whether the area was significantly more economically and socially downtrodden than numerous other rural areas in Nova Scotia at the time that Sister Bonnie returned in 1979, but it certainly lacked adequate essential social and public health services.³ Nevertheless, as an individual Religious starting a new life, Sister Bonnie also had to consider the cost of

²John Collier Jr., photographer for pilot Study Field Operation 1950-52 as noted in Hughes, Tremblay, Kapoport and Leighton, People of Cove and Woodlot. Communities from the Viewpoint of Social Psychiatry. The Stirling County Study of Psychiatric Disorder and Socio-cultural Environment. vol.11. (New York: Basic Books, 1960) 244-45. Although this study was published under the fictional name of 'Stirling County', the map shown is a mirror image of Digby County, and it is a widely accepted fact that the study is based on information compiled from Digby County. Sister Bonnie was born in 1940.

³This was the major finding of the "Stirling Report".

living as an inescapable factor in deciding where to settle. Thus, living in a rural area such as Digby County offered a potentially less expensive way of life than a larger town or city. It was this combination of factors, some more influential than others, that brought Sister Bonnie to Digby.⁴

Sister Bonnie looked for real estate from Annapolis to Briar Island over a period of two years. She finally purchased "Bethany Place" in 1979 as the foundation for her work. In keeping with her agreement with Bishop Hatfield to support herself, the land was acquired without any Diocesan financing. She made a downpayment with money saved from the time she spent working after she left the convent. She obtained a mortgage, which the sisters are still paying off, to finance the rest. Although it needed a great deal of work, Sister Bonnie thought the ten-acre property with its country setting could provide a fine house of prayer, and, eventually a retreat centre.

Although she had no income, it was necessary to begin immediately to gather provisions for the house: for herself, and for those she intended to help. It was fortuitous that Sister Bonnie's background in psychiatric nursing enabled her to care for a seventy year-old socially retarded, non-verbal male who received a pension. He would otherwise have had to receive institutional care at a psychiatric hospital.

⁴The information for this section was obtained orally. It included: telephone interview with Bishop Hatfield, 13 January 1992, personal interview with Sister Bonnie, and personal interview with Bishop Peters in which he referred to correspondence from the late 1970s between Sister Bonnie and Bishop Hatfield.

Nicknamed 'Uncle Bob', the boarder was to be sent to the Nova Scotia (Psychiatric) Hospital in 1981 at the age of seventy. He had become increasingly unmanageable for his family since a childhood disease rendered him 'socially retarded', nonverbal, and unable to cope with various everyday situations. Because of her training as a psychiatric nurse, Sister Bonnie was asked to consider caring for Bob. Although it was a great responsibility, Sister Bonnie accepted for reasons that included her need of income. Uncle Bob has been at Bethany Place since 26 December 1981. Although limited in communication skills as well as some activities, he seems to enjoy living at Bethany Place still, ten years later. This is noticeable, for example, in his dedication to his daily chore of taking care of the compost heap. The two residents of Bethany Place lived on Uncle Bob's pension, the first consistent source of income for the house, while Sister Bonnie also became involved in other forms of informal community social work as well as church work in the Parish of Digby-Weymouth. In 1982, another sister came to live at Bethany Place. Sister Barbara^b, a native Haligonian, took initial vows in the same Ontario community to which Sister Bonnie had belonged. After two and a half years, however, Sister Barbara decided she would not profess life vows at the community, but rather felt she was called to Nova Scotia. She approached the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Nova Scotia, Bishop Hatfield, who in turn encouraged her to contact Sister Bonnie at Bethany Place. After an initial trial period, Sister

^bBorn Barbara Bowser, 24 January 1949.

Barbara decided to continue at Bethany Place where she felt she could better serve in an active, more direct ministry than she had done before returning to Nova Scotia.

The two members of the SLSM persisted in their work, living on their boarder's pension.⁶ Their goals continued to be to provide local community service through what Sister Bonnie refers to as "band-aid" help. Obviously not in a position to provide financial aid, the sisters were creative in helping their disadvantaged neighbours. They acquired two goats and some hens and provided those most in need with goat's milk and eggs on a regular basis. Later they embarked on gardening and distributed the produce. The sisters also began to make available second hand clothing to people who needed it.

Then, in May 1985, Uncle Bob was joined by another boarder at Bethany Place. 'Beverly', a thirty-nine year-old with a mental age of two, has lived with the sisters for seven years. Beverly grew up in the Digby area with her foster mother. Due to advancing age, however, the foster mother felt she could no longer care for Beverly on a full time basis and was advised to contact the sisters

⁶There is a canon law that prohibits Anglican Religious Orders from having the power to accept final vows from individual novices until the community has at least six members. Because of this, Sister Barbara still has not taken her final vows. (Sister Bonnie already had before coming to Digby.) Nevertheless the SLSM is definitely permitted to receive postulants according to Sister Bonnie and Sister Barbara's decision of whether the potential postulant is suitable. For more information on the rules and guidelines of religious communities see Anglican Religious Communities: A Directory of Principles and Practice. Issued by the Advisory Council For Religious Communities. Oxford: SLG Press, 1976. (This is currently being revised for the fourth time.)

at Bethany Place to see if they would accept another boarder. Beverly requires constant supervision, but usually goes to her foster mother's house on the weekends, which gives the sisters more freedom to accomplish their other work during those two days.

As a home, Bethany Place is utilized in numerous ways as a temporary shelter. For example, foster children are often cared for at Bethany Place while a permanent home is being found for them. The children's time with the Sisters has varied from a one night stay to a period of almost a year. Battered women can also find refuge at Bethany Place. The home has even been modified to serve occasionally as a detoxification centre for people trying to discontinue substance abuse. In short, the social work of Sister Bonnie and Sister Barbara is based on the sub-region's need; they try to accommodate a wide range of people in distress. To do so, they have had to maintain a very high level of adaptability in their daily schedules.

With the lack of consistency the sisters inevitably encounter, one may forget their primary purpose of leading prayerful lives. The amount of time spent in formal prayer in their tiny chapel varies, but daily offices are usually said four times a day, Matins, Noon Prayers, Evensong, and Compline. According to the Church Calender, this schedule is increased or modified. Even in their spiritual lives, however, the sisters have to be flexible. Sister Bonnie mentioned that some of the daily offices are missed or rescheduled if an urgent matter interferes with their agenda. This could be in the form of any of the numerous people fleeing to

the home for solace.

The sisters offer spiritual guidance in various ways to people in the area and the Diocese of Nova Scotia. "Quiet Days" are among the sisters' favourite forms of ministry. These events, which offer a full day of prayer and reflection are usually open to members of all religious denominations, and have grown from one a year to a current total of three. The sisters believe that the Quiet Days hosted by Bethany Place have been highly effective. In Sister Bonnie's words, "quiet days are what we do best."⁷ Evidence of this is found in the number of participants which has been as high as thirty, even though the house can hold only sixteen people comfortably. The sisters are also occasionally invited to various churches to speak about their work and to conduct retreats and quiet days. In the last year Sister Barbara spoke at two prominent Halifax congregational women's groups.

In sum, the functions of the sisters at Bethany Place are too numerous and varied to list. However, the main purposes are to dispense food and clothing to the needy, to provide temporary shelter in emergency situations, and to live contemplative lives to the highest possible degree their other duties allow. In Digby, a town which struggles with a particularly depressed economy and thus with inadequate social services, the charitable work of the two sisters at Bethany Place has certainly had a positive impact.

Although very independent in many facets, the SLSM is linked to several administrative structures in the Church and community.

⁷Personal Interview, Sister Bonnie, 01 March 1991.

The sisters receive both formal and informal support from the Bishop, another community, and a Board of Directors.

Leonard Hatfield was the bishop of the diocese when Sister Bonnie started her work at Bethany Place in 1979. Bishop Hatfield was familiar with the operation and ideology of a religious community, as he was affiliated with the Sisters of Saint John the Divine in Toronto in the 1950s. This was a period of particular stress for the community because of necessary restructuring. Beginning in the early 1950s, the SSJD felt it had to pull out of several projects due to an lack of staff caused by the advancing age of several sisters which rendered them less able to hold certain jobs, as well as the decision of a few women to actually leave the community.⁸ His association with the SSJD taught Bishop Hatfield a great deal about the practical workings of religious communities. However, in the fall 1984, Bishop Hatfield retired and was succeeded by Bishop Arthur Peters on 29 November 1984. Less experienced with women's religious communities, his concern about the welfare of the sisters at Bethany Place led Bishop Peters eventually to look for guidance from the House of Bishops.⁹

⁸Bishop Hatfield remembers many long discussions with Mother Aquila over the closure of one particular residential school for mentally handicapped children, St. John's on-the-Hill, near Aurora. The closure in 1955 resulted in three offended sisters deciding to leave the community and continue to work on their own. One of the sisters was Sister Anna, former superintendent of All Saints' Springhill Hospital.

⁹Personal interview with Bishop Peters, 30 January 1992, as well as telephone interviews with Bishop Hatfield, 13 January 1992, and Sister Anita, CSC, 08 February 1992. All other references to interviews with these three people occurred on the above given dates.

The secretary of the House of Bishops' Standing Committee on Religious Life, the Reverend Dick Johns, contacted an Ontario community for consultation. Sister Anita, Provincial Superior of the Community of the Sisters of the Church, along with Johns, travelled to Digby in 1987, to prepare a recommendation for Bishop Peters.¹⁰ The consultation recommended that an affiliation be struck between the sisters at Bethany Place and the Community of the Sisters of the Church, CSC, in Oakville.

The CSC were founded in England in 1870 by Emily Ayckbowm. In September 1890, CSC sisters arrived in Toronto. Currently, the order has two houses in Canada, one in Oakville and the other in Hamilton, with a total of ten sisters. This number varies as sisters are transferred to different houses in England, Australia and the Solomon Islands. Historically, the community worked in the areas of education and social work, running several schools and orphanages.¹¹ This work has evolved over the years to include numerous other areas.

Informal in nature, the agreement of the new community in Digby with the well established CSC, offered Sister Bonnie and Sister Barbara moral support as well as the structure present in a larger community. Sister Anita describes two particular

¹⁰The Sisters of the Community of the Church (CSC) are the only other Canadian Women's Religious Order besides the SSJD. The latter would have been an inappropriate choice for consultation because of both Sister Bonnie and Sister Barbara's previous affiliation with that order.

¹¹It was only in the 1980s that ownership of the last British school run by the CSC was given over to a school board to run.

difficulties which the new agreement resolved, both of which dealt with aspects of community life. Historically, as well as contemporarily, community life is the greatest physical element of the religious life, and is the representative family for Religious.¹² 'Community' is the abstract term given to the lives of professed sisters living together under a common rule.¹³ It is rare for sisters to be away from their congregations unless they are away on community business. Even then they would likely stay at other religious houses. The vacation times familiar to secular people, Christmas and Easter, are not an option to sisters because they are especially busy times at the convent when the members are unable to go home to their families because of pastoral commitment to those in need.¹⁴ In short, community is integral to the religious life and cannot be attained if there are not enough sisters.

Many religious agree that the most important time to be living in community is during the formative first years in the convent, the postulancy and novitiate. A community has certain dynamics which are acquired by living together and working out guidelines,

¹²The Rule or constitution of many orders specifically outlines two things: a life of prayer, and a life in community.

¹³Many of the Sisters whom I have interviewed have expressed the difficulties of living in community. The one who described it best said bluntly, "You know what it's like living in a university residence with twenty-five girls. So how would you like to do that for the rest of your life with no breaks?"

¹⁴Also when I interviewed Anglican nuns, many expressed that the part of the religious life their parents either most resented or thought most unfair was that the nuns did not get to spend the holidays with their families.

a constitution, and a rule to follow. Regarding Bethany Place, it was felt that Sister Barbara in particular should have an opportunity to spend time in a larger community because she had only had this experience for two and a half years at the Ontario convent in which she first tested her vocation. This was soon arranged, and Sister Barbara spent nine months at the Sisters of the Church's Saint Michael's Convent in Oakville.

Another concern which Sister Anita raised was the danger that having only two sisters living together constituted, and worked as, more of a partnership than a community. This, she thought, could create a difficult situation in which to have another sister join, as she would be the odd person out as the last to join. This case has not yet arisen, but in Sister Anita's mind it is a legitimate concern for a young community which hoped to acquire postulants. The support of the CSC, in the form of the sisters from each house visiting between Oakville and Digby, or simply telephoning, makes Bethany Place function as less of an exclusive partnership. There is a greater sense of dependence on a larger organization, the CSC. Major decisions as well as solid friendships have been shared between the convents.

Along with Bishop's Peters' linking of the Bethany Place with the Sisters of the Church, it is interesting to note that there had been an earlier meeting through one of the CSC's associates, Ursula McMurry. Mrs McMurry and her husband, who is an Anglican priest, live in Ontario but have a summer home a few miles from Bethany Place. In the summer of 1983 when Sister Anita was visiting the

McMurrays, the three called on Sister Bonnie and Sister Barbara, thereby initiating the first meeting which partly led to the more structured affiliation four years later.

Every Religious community has a "Visitor". As defined by the guidelines of the religious life:

He is the guardian of the Constitution of the Community, and the guarantor to the Church at large of its sound administration, stability, and right to confidence, and he is also the normal court of appeal for the maintenance of its discipline¹⁵

Bishop Peters, the current Anglican Bishop of Nova Scotia, is the Visitor of the SLSM. In this capacity he discharges the following duties: to see the sisters at least once a year to review their vows, to sit on their Board of Directors and to link the society with the diocese.

The first capacity is the only duty actually defined in the guidelines for a Visitor. Bishop Peters meets annually with the sisters individually and discusses the past year concerning their prayer lives, and the concerns of the society. The meeting is important in that the sisters are responsible to report to an official regarding their vows, rather than being entirely self-governing. Advice may be given and new ideas introduced. Also as Visitor, the Bishop must receive all minutes of meetings of the society and their yearly financial statement. The Bishop's position enables him to invite and include the sisters in diocesan functions. In recent years he has been making a conscious effort to raise the sisters' level of visibility. This is a valuable aid

¹⁵Anglican Religious Communities: A Directory p.29.

to the sisters.

The Bishop is also one of fifteen members of the SLSM's board of directors, and thus attends the annual meeting of the society. He is thereby kept abreast of the activities of Bethany Place. Clearly the Bishop's affiliation and responsibility with the sisters are intertwined, and enable him to do each job more effectively. Also, Sister Anita, CSC, has met with Bishop Peters and he has visited Saint Michael's Convent in Oakville.¹⁶

There is a fifteen-member board of Directors for Bethany Place. This was necessary to institute for the society to obtain a licence as a charitable organization. Bishop Peters suggested that the board exists primarily for legal purposes. Sister Bonnie,¹⁷ notes that the board of directors also gives input and offers advice to the sisters, The individual members informally represent the Church at the national, diocesan, and local levels. A diverse group, many members have areas of expertise relevant to specific areas concerning Bethany Place. Thus, although the majority of day to day decisions are made by the two sisters at Bethany Place, there are clearly several people to whom the sisters are accountable. This relates to their vow of obedience, and the official guidelines of the religious life, and the tradition of religious orders.

¹⁶Information for this section, unless otherwise noted, was obtained from interviews with Sister Anita, Bishop Peters, Sister Bonnie, and Sister Barbara.

¹⁷Both Sister Bonnie and Sister Barbara are members of the board.

The two sisters living at Bethany Place cannot provide an adequate sample on which to base general trends regarding Anglican nuns. However, they need not be dismissed in explaining the motivation and practise of Anglican Religious in the Diocese of Nova Scotia. In fact, the small membership provides a fine qualitative analysis which many larger studies omit for practical reasons. Furthermore, the small membership at Bethany Place is indicative of many things, including the direction of the religious life and the measuring of diocesan support for religious life.

It is certainly evident that the number of women entering the religious life is rapidly declining. This is due to the many other opportunities available to women now, as compared with those available in earlier years. Until recent decades, a woman who wanted to have a career as a teacher might have chosen convent life as an avenue to fulfil her career goal. Now that it is socially acceptable for women to have careers regardless of their marital status, and there is less social pressure to marry, there are far more options for women besides having a family, or entering a convent. In addition to this, twenty-five per cent of Canadian Roman Catholic nuns have received dispensation from their vows since the Second Vatican Council in the late 1960s.¹⁸ Nevertheless, for there to have been zero growth in nine years at Bethany Place, Nova Scotia's only Anglican women's community and the only Anglican religious community east of Toronto, is

¹⁸CBCFM "Sunday Morning Centrepoint" with Mary Lou Finley, 10 March 1991.

significant. A lack of public awareness has certainly contributed to this stagnancy. This is not to say that a campaign to advertise the need of more vocations would result in a flood of applications at Bethany Place. However, the quiet existence of the Diocese's nuns seems to have relegated them, especially in their early years, almost to a level of secrecy. This is not entirely the fault of the sisters; in fact, the Christmas newsletters and various pamphlets for their Associate program illustrate that the Sisters are attempting to make themselves better known.¹⁹

Furthermore, within the Parish of Digby-Weymouth, the Sisters are highly visible. Sister Bonnie is a church organist and choir director, and Sister Barbara regularly leads the Prayers of the People at Sunday services of Morning Prayer. Along with this, both Sisters are members of at least three parish committees. The problem does not appear to be at the parish level, but rather at the diocesan level. It is recognized that the diocese is not bound by any civil or ecclesiastical law to care for religious orders that are in their geographic jurisdiction. Nevertheless, there are numerous ways that a diocese could provide support to a struggling new community.

The diocese has been helpful in the past by including sisters Bonnie and Barbara in the list of suggestions to parishes of those

¹⁹Associates do not take vows, but agree to remain active in and participate regularly in church activities and services. They maintain ties with their order, pray for them daily, and follow a basic Associate's Rule. There are currently ten Associates and ten Probationary Associates. As well the sisters hope that their board of directors will become associates.

qualified to lead retreats. This could be expanded and strengthened by the diocese's inclusion, as part of one of its routine mail outs, of an introduction and description of Bethany Place. This could be sent to all parishes, rather than specifically to those who request such information. From there the parishes would accept the responsibility of deciding whether to contact the Digby sisters, thereby relieving diocesan administration of scheduling procedures. The framework for this option is already in place.

The Diocese of Nova Scotia includes 113 parishes divided into thirteen regions. It is a highly structured organization that maintains contact in order to regulate its membership. Mailings are regularly sent to parish priests, regional meetings are held almost monthly, numerous diocesan committees meet several times a year, and lay delegations are sent to a Diocesan Synod annually. Whether the inaction of the diocese in helping the Sisters in this way is merely an oversight on the part of Diocesan administration, or a conscious position on the principle that if a religious community is to survive it must struggle to develop or be self sufficient is difficult to discern.

The minutes of Synod, as well as other diocesan information is printed annually. Approximately the first half of the Diocesan Yearbook, or Synod Journal, lists various names, addresses, and statistics. The mailing addresses and telephone numbers of every priest residing in the diocese also constitute several pages. However, there is no mention of the names of the two sisters or the

Association at Bethany Place.²⁰ It is impossible to compare this situation with that of other dioceses that are home to religious communities because the only other relevant dioceses are Toronto and Niagara, and their Synod journals have quite a different structure.²¹ However, the Yearbook of the Anglican Church in Canada includes short descriptions of the religious communities in the country. It appears that it would not be difficult to include Bethany Place in a similar manner in the Nova Scotia Yearbook.²²

The diocese would undoubtedly be pleased if Sister Bonnie and Sister Barbara were to increase their own publicity. Unfortunately, herein lies another obstacle: funding. It has only been in the last few years that the sisters have been able to afford postage costs for their Christmas mail-out. It should be acknowledged that these sisters, like any other monastics, have taken a vow of personal poverty. Similarly, it is considered best that the money these sisters do garner goes toward social causes. Thus if the diocese of Nova Scotia, or any less formal organ under it, is able to help the sisters to become more visible, it is most appreciated.

Sister Bonnie was expected to be economically self-sufficient

²⁰In fact, the central office of the Church, the Diocesan Centre, did not even have Bethany Place's address available when I telephoned to request it last January. It was later acquired at the Bishop's office.

²¹Personal interview Sister Anita, CSC, Oakville, 08 February 1992.

²²Personal interview with Father Melvin Langille, an Anglican priest in Cole Harbour, N.S., 06 February 1992.

upon coming to Nova Scotia.²³ This is in contrast to the other two Anglican religious orders that have existed in the province in the last century. Both the Sisters of Saint Margaret and the Sisters of Saint John the Divine were invited to Nova Scotia to fulfil a specific duty, to operate a hospital. Thus the Diocese is not responsible to the sisters at Bethany Place in the same manner: for example, in arranging that their living expenses be paid or that the supplies necessary for their work be provided. Yet, by acknowledging Sister Bonnie's work at Bethany Place, the Bishop was offering a certain amount of guidance.

The economic survival of Bethany Place has continued to be a struggle over the years. The sisters have depended heavily on the pensions of their two boarders. Clearly Bob and Beverly are more than an income to the sisters. Bethany Place's two boarders have become an important part of the sisters' lives. They are included in all meals at the home, meet most visitors, and are noted in the prayers of the daily offices. However, that the sisters had so little choice in deciding how to earn a living in the economically depressed Digby County, is difficult.

As Bethany Place has grown over the last decade, more people have become aware of the operation and have offered donations. These have been very much appreciated by Sister Bonnie and Sister Barbara, for they enable them to expand the amount of social work

²³Sisters very rarely go to an area on their own. They are usually requested by a bishop, someone with whom the sisters seldom would argue. The vow of obedience is usually interpreted to mean that the sisters go quickly to where ever they are asked.

they do as well as allowing for some of their own provisions. However, small donations are too tenuous a means to achieve consistency and success in the work the sisters would like to do. Specifically, donations can become a form of manipulation on the part of the givers, in that the donors can decide not to donate if they disapprove of something the sisters have done. Sometimes regular donations are discontinued and the sisters can only guess how they may have offended the patron. This instance was particularly evident in the last few years. When it became known that the Sisters used new forms of liturgy for their daily offices, rather than the traditional Book of Common Prayer, a significant number of donations from conservative, traditional church people were suddenly cut off. This obviously put the sisters in a very difficult moral position. They needed the donations, yet they believed strongly that new liturgies were necessary if the Anglican Church is to survive and prosper in the years to come.²⁴

Included in the various problems caused by a dependence on donations is the fact that many people are not in a position to donate the amount they would like. Organizations such as Bethany Place could conceivably have a great deal of support and be appreciated by a large number of people. However, if the support is not from wealthy individuals, it cannot count in economic terms. Furthermore, no one is bound to donate the same amount yearly, and

²⁴Personal Interview with Sister Bonnie 01-02 March 1991. The donors did not actually suggest a reason but the sisters feel certain that the ceasing of these donations was due to their choice of liturgies.

so the sisters cannot plan ahead but must wait until a cheque actually arrives.²⁵

When their finances are especially strained, Sister Bonnie and Sister Barbara are sometimes required to venture into the labour force. Since May 1990, for example, Sister Barbara has taken a job typing in an office three days a week. Temporary employment is not always an option, however, in Digby, where jobs are so scarce. Sister Bonnie supplements the income of Bethany Place by teaching piano lessons. This too is limiting, as the most she can charge in her rural area is seven dollars per half hour.

Because of the variation of the sisters' incomes, the outreach of Bethany Place is restricted. This is the primary reason that the sisters at Bethany Place are forced to provide 'band-aid' support rather than lasting programs that would have more potential to make positive, long term changes. It also prevents the sisters from upgrading their education; that is simply too luxurious an option for the sisters at this time.

It would be naive to conclude a summary of Bethany Place without mentioning some of the criticism that Bethany Place has endured. Sister Bonnie and Sister Barbara have been accused of failing to provide adequate spiritual guidance and education in the

²⁵Many successful, well established order depend on donations but are usually fortunate enough to receive large endowments that might included real estate or cash. Perhaps if Bethany Place were to become better known it too would be so fortunate.

Diocese, using modern as opposed to traditional forms of liturgy,²⁶ and participating too much in active rather than contemplative endeavours. Whether these allegations are true and whether they are actually areas in which the sisters should change or alter their focus is certainly difficult to ascertain. However, it is worth examining these points in order further to understand the parameters of Bethany Place.

Many people expect the sisters to provide spiritual education for both lay people and clergy. This is seen as a natural responsibility of women religious; because their lives revolve around prayer and reflection, they should be able to help others by sharing their experience. The sisters' first obstacle in this is that they are bound to responsibilities, including caring for their boarders, in Digby. They are not often in a position to travel, for example to Halifax where most Diocesan events are centred. This has especially been the case since Sister Barbara took a job. Before this, conceivably, one sister could have stayed at Bethany Place while the other one travelled occasionally. However, as it now stands, finances are too tight and responsibilities are too onerous for the sisters to be mobile. At the same time, if visitors wish to come to Bethany House for prayer and reflection, the sisters welcome them, provided they are given ample warning so that other things may be rescheduled.

²⁶This reflects a serious and widespread division in the wider Church as well as in the Anglo Catholic or High Church party. It should not be interpreted as peculiar to the Sisters at Bethany Place.

The other side to this argument is that Sister Bonnie was asked by Bishop Hatfield simply to provide a religious presence. She was never formally asked to be a religious education teacher, and neither does she have the educational background for it. A stipulation in being a religious is that the individual be a devout, holy, spiritual person. Beyond this, some may have the gift of teaching and some may not. If this Diocese feels, or some people in it feel, this to be a weakness of the work of Bethany Place, it is possible that the Sisters could be provided with training in this area.

The criticism that the sisters should use traditional rather than modern liturgies is one that varies greatly among the clergy and lay people of the diocese.²⁷ Sister Bonnie and Sister Barbara were using alternative liturgies long before their arrival at Bethany Place. Both of them began this practice in their Novitiate years in Ontario. Many of those who criticize the sisters are unaware of their long history with alternative liturgy. Combined with this, the sisters' reasons for preferring modern liturgies are understandable. Where the traditional liturgies used exclusive language, the newer ones tend to use inclusive language, something which the sisters feel is more relevant to their worship. Furthermore, some of the condemnation of the new liturgies comes

²⁷As mentioned earlier, there is a great variety of opinion in the area of contemporary versus traditional liturgy. Sister Bonnie and Sister Barbara belong to a very large group (including both sides of the argument) of parishes and individuals who have been criticized for their choice of liturgy. For their daily offices, the sisters have been using the revised American Book of Common Prayer for many years.

from people with backgrounds in classical theology. Because neither of the Sisters have such educations,²⁸ they are probably less sympathetic to the concern of the Canadian Book of Common Prayer supporters, and, to the concern that modifications in gender-specific language have the power to fundamentally alter the teaching of the Bible.²⁹

The final major criticism of the work of Bethany Place is that the sisters spend too much time on 'worldly' affairs rather than prayer and reflection. This is certainly a judgement that few people, if any, may be capable of debating. What might be mentioned, however, is that the primary goal in being a religious is personal perfection.³⁰ How an individual or an institution attempts to achieve this varies. It follows, then, in the words of one author, that "... the immense variety among religious orders can therefore be attributed to differences of means in pursuit of this goal."³¹ In short, with the exception of reasonable, justifiable behaviour relative to time, place, and need, there is neither a right or wrong way to live as a religious. As was already mentioned in the first part of this paper, the questions regarding a balance of social work and contemplation were numerous

²⁸Sister Bonnie has a music degree and training in psychiatry, while Sister Barbara took commercial training in high school and worked in an office until she entered Religious Life.

²⁹For more information, see for example, William Oddie, What Will Happen to God? (San Francisco: Ignatius P, 1984).

³⁰Some orders, such as the Franciscans and Jesuits, are active while others, like the Trappists, follow a contemplative Rule.

³¹Hill 52.

in the mid 1800s when the establishment of Anglican religious orders was being considered. Today the same factors continue to be debated. It is well acknowledged that the application of the principles of the religious life need to be constantly adapted to time and place. Thus the criticisms toward Bethany Place are common to any community.

We hear of women who enter convents and of women who leave them. Too often we assume that those who stay were satisfied and definitely had a 'vocation', and those who left were disillusioned and did not have a long standing purpose in religious life. In addition to this picture, however, are women who leave but continue to fulfil their vocation through another channel. These women may, in fact, have found that convent life did not offer a sufficient means for fulfilling their call to religion. A rare breed of women who leave convents actually initiate their own communities, designed to fit the perceived social and spiritual needs of a particular area. This latter group tend to be under suspicion because their ways are less well known and their activities often follow a less formal, historically grounded rule.

Learning about these less conventional sisters, such as the ones at Bethany Place, can present a qualitative yet far-reaching appraisal. They are women who were unfulfilled by the regimentation of convent life and thereby indicate that such an existence is not necessarily the best or only way to serve as a Religious. It is not their discontent with Christianity that makes them leave, but the idea that they are not meeting the needs of

society in the best possible way. Bethany Place is a fine example of discontent that led to the development of an alternative form of religious life.

The SLSM is also an example of the struggle that is synonymous with establishing a religious order. The challenge of having Bethany Place better known as well as consistently respected in the diocese is in many ways reminiscent of the founding of convents in the late nineteenth century.³² In the same vein, Bethany Place is distinctive, with its small membership and rural setting. Nevertheless, the way the Bishop saw best to stabilize and link Bethany Place with the rest of the Church was through affiliating the society with a more traditional order. Although this subtracts from Bethany Place's uniqueness, the arrangement seems to be working well.

The purpose of affiliating the Digby Sisters with a well-established order offered numerous benefits. The goals and direction of the sisters at Bethany Place have not changed. Their ministry continues to be one of availability. Nevertheless, the perception of others in their respect of the SLSM may have been heightened. This is not to question the ability of the Digby sisters. However, as Bishop Peters remarked, "One need not only to be doing good. One must be perceived as doing good." Sisters Bonnie and Barbara's relationship with the Sisters at Saint Patrick's Roman Catholic Convent in Digby has always been strong. The Sisters of the Church can add their support, which has a

³²Note examples provided in the first two chapters.

relevance based less on the local situation, but more on the importance of the sense of community which is so important in religious life.

As noted that in Chapter Two of this study, the Reverend Mother did not want to send less than three sisters to Springhill, as this was the minimum she believed necessary to maintain community. Religious orders carry on this tradition today. Bishop Peters saw this of preeminent importance when he initiated the agreement between the Digby sisters and the Sisters of the Church. Of course, the arrangement was also a positive one for the Diocese of Nova Scotia. Religious orders operate independently of the diocese, yet out of courtesy on both sides, acknowledge those events which are of relevance to each other. Having a young Religious society in a diocese is usually inevitably more of a responsibility for the bishop than a well established religious order. Again this is not a reflection on the society, but rather the fact that it takes time for the diocese to familiarise itself with the order. Furthermore, as Visitor to the SLSM, Bishop Peters has certain responsibilities to the Sisters. The sisters are somewhat less dependent on the Bishop since 1987 as the Provincial of the C.S.C., Sister Anita, has become an advisor to them.

Bethany Place has certainly lacked the publicity one would expect for the only Anglican Women's Religious order in Nova Scotia since 1949. Due to the lack of available evidence, it would be dangerous to draw firm conclusions about the low level of awareness concerning Bethany Place. However, at this stage of research the

lack of printed material is perhaps the most revealing information of the treatment of Anglican Sisterhoods in Nova Scotia. It clearly suggests that Anglican nuns are not viewed as a significant part of the Church. Sisters are expected to be separate and self-sufficient in every way and thus should not require aid, such as publicity from the Diocese. In short, the Diocese may not have been consciously trying to suppress women's religious orders, yet such orders were undoubtedly a low priority of the plans of the diocese.

The relationship of the diocese and individual parishes toward religious communities, specifically the Society of Our Lady, Saint Mary, has been consistent with that behaviour toward the Sisters of Saint Margaret in Halifax in the 1890s and the Sisters of Saint John the Divine in Springhill in the mid twentieth century: neglect and indifference.³³ An analysis as to why Anglican religious orders have never obtained a strong foothold in Nova Scotia in the last century will be examined in the following chapter.

³³Though not specifically on the part of Bishop Peters.



Brian Madol/Yarmouth Bulletin

Sister Barbara, left, and Sister Bonnie, Anglican nuns, run Bethany Place on Digby Neck. The tiny religious community is the only such Anglican centre east of Ontario.

gates. Anything from blankets to ... collect money for ...

CONCLUSION

The foregoing chapters combine to illustrate the intermittent presence of Anglican women's religious orders in Nova Scotia in the past hundred years. The significance of the orders ranges from the obvious -the fact that the Anglican Church does have women's orders and that denominations other than Roman Catholicism allow monasticism- to the little-known aspects such as the existence at times of firm opposition to these nuns. Although the orders did not become as solidly established as some of their Upper Canadian or American counterparts, it was not due to a lack of persistence. The Sisters of Saint John the Divine stayed in Springhill for thirteen years even though they began to face opposition from their chaplain in their second year, and the Society of Our Lady, Saint Mary is currently in its thirteenth year of existence despite a lack of economic and pastoral support. The determination of these nuns to persevere in economically depressed and socially downtrodden areas is evident.

The conditions for Roman Catholic nuns appeared to be

excellent during the mid nineteenth to mid twentieth century. Their numbers grew quickly and they were represented throughout the province. In 1946 there were 1260 nuns in 67 houses. In 1965 the phenomenon seems to have climaxed with a total of 1733 in 99 houses.¹ Nuns were essential to the Roman Catholic school system, and were also much involved in hospital and social work. As indicated in Chapter One, Anglicans envisaged that their sisterhoods might duplicate the success obtained by Roman Catholic nuns. However, Anglican nuns worked in comparable geographic locations during the same time periods, without obtaining the support or growth that the Roman Catholic nuns received. Monasticism was not so well developed, appreciated, or accepted in the Anglican church.

There are several reasons for the failure of Anglican women's religious orders to prosper, including their lack of visibility in areas such as Springhill and Digby and a general lack of tolerance for anything resembling Roman Catholicism. In order to receive more members, religious orders have to be recognized. Publicity, however, is a difficult goal for monastics, and one that sometimes implies conflicts with important principles. Consider the Sisters of Saint Margaret and the Sisters of Saint John the Divine who both came to Nova Scotia in response to an invitation. They were totally unfamiliar with the province. It was not in their tradition, nor would it have been deemed proper, for these women to

¹Annuario Pontificio: Per L'Anno, 1949-1970. Citta Del Vaticano: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1949-1970.

introduce themselves. In the secular press, both orders were introduced upon their arrival, but other news of them was reported only sporadically.

Occasionally the sisters had the opportunity to educate others about their orders. On an annual branch house visit to Springhill in the 1940s, the Mother Superior of the Sisters of Saint John the Divine, Mother Dora, spoke at King's College to seminarians. In general, however, the reality remains in 1992 as expressed by Sister Anita: "what new orders [such as the SLSM] really have to do is get the word out."² Methods of accomplishing this include attending every possible diocesan function in order to be visible. "Even if the bishop doesn't invite them to Synod as delegates," commented one priest, "they should go as observers."³ Distinctive in their habits, Sisters Bonnie and Barbara could gain a great deal of exposure from going to this annual meeting which is attended by more than three hundred delegates.

Over the years, the three groups of Anglican women religious in Nova Scotia have received various levels of recognition. The branch house of the Sisters of Saint John the Divine that served in All Saints' Springhill Hospital from 1936 to 1949 was conspicuous in Springhill. However, there did not seem to be any effort on the

²Sister Anita, CSC, Telephone Interview 08 Feb 1992.

³Father Melvin Langille, Personal Interview 06 Feb 1992. The sisters could be incorporated into the existing structures by being added to the clergy list or invited as coopted delegates of the bishop. In the Diocese of Huron the Sister Provincial of the Sisters of the Church, Sister Anita is regularly invited by the bishop to be a synod delegate. Perhaps this will be a future consideration of the Diocese of N.S.

part of the diocese to introduce the sisters into other areas of the province, whether it be to reside for a time or merely to visit and give people the opportunity to realize there are nuns in denominations other than that of Roman Catholicism. The awareness of women religious may have been strong in the town of Springhill but it did not filter throughout the province. Had they been better known in other areas, and their support more geographically diverse, Sisters Anna, Thelma-Anne, and Lucinda might have made a more lasting impression on Nova Scotians and thereby created a more solid base for later endeavors by women religious.

Also regarding geographic location, the present Bishop of Nova Scotia believes that a more central location such as Truro could make the Society of Our Lady, Saint Mary more accessible and visible. The present economic status of the sisters and their loyalty to their boarders, however, make relocation an unlikely option. Due to the difficulty of achieving financial stability in Digby County, this cycle is difficult to interrupt and means the sisters cannot afford much money for making themselves better known. Although blame is often directed toward the diocese for failing to provide funding, Bishop Peters was very clear, when interviewed regarding the reason the diocese does not give Bethany Place any economic support. While appreciating the sisters' work in providing a religious presence as well as various needed social services, but he noted that "it is historic and universal policy

that Religious be independent."⁴ He continued by saying that he believed that if an order is meant to survive it will, and that it would be wrong artificially to help it along by making an official donation from the diocese.

Along with geographic location as a cause of the low level of awareness of women religious in Nova Scotia, anti-Catholic sentiment was another major obstacle all three groups of women religious had to endure. The suspicion that nuns would bring the Anglican Church closer to Roman Catholicism was a major concern to many Anglicans when the Church Hospital opened in 1891. At that time the prejudice was intensified by anti-Catholic literature prevalent in the form of pamphlets as well as articles in religious newspapers such as The Presbyterian Witness and Church Work. While the Sisters of Saint John the Divine were in Springhill, and since the Society of Our Lady, Saint Mary have been in Digby, anti-Catholic sentiment has not been obvious in the secular media, but has continued to be strong in many parts of the province. Supported by the large number of members in their own church, Roman Catholic nuns flourished in the midst of anti-Catholic attitudes. Anglican nuns did not survive so well, because of their denomination's smaller size in Nova Scotia and the lack of complete support offered by Anglican Church.

Stereotypical characteristics -such as sweetness, shyness and constant compassion- have created the myth that nuns never face

⁴Bishop Peters, Personal Interview 26 Jan 1992. Peters has supported the sisters by inviting them to diocesan events and including them in the diocesan cycle of prayer.

opposition, suspicion, or hatred. There is also a misrepresentation that women religious are free from the worrisome problems of the world, that that is why they look young and are so well preserved. As the last three chapters have illustrated, these opinions are distortions of the truth. Nuns have practical economic considerations such as food, shelter, and the financing of their work. Furthermore they are vulnerable to opposition, just like secular people. Part of the reason historians have excluded nuns from general histories is because they too believed the stereotypes which perceived nuns more as extensions of the church than actual people. Studies such as this one attempt to present the unique lives of women religious realistically.

With increased attention being given to women's history, it is an apt time to uncover convent history. The historiography of women religious is currently bipolar. At the one end are the community-produced histories which portray nuns as prayerful and compassionate members of their order. Secular historians have begun, recently, to describe nuns as women who entered merely because of the lack of options. It is to be hoped that a more realistic middle ground will soon emerge. Such a portrayal must acknowledge that few choices were historically available to women and that young women consciously joined orders. Some entered out of dissatisfaction with the traditional role of a motherhood, some to obtain an education or maintain a career, and some to fulfil of a genuine religious vocation. Such precise analyses may be attained on a small scale, and then may in turn be compared with

other studies. Anglican nuns in Nova Scotia offer a manageable subject of study, with respect to their membership and number of congregations, and yet provide an alternative to Roman Catholic orders and one that historians have hitherto failed to consider. The inclusion of Anglican nuns, in Nova Scotia is important in the Canadian historiography of women religious, which currently concentrates on the Quebec experience.

In considering the future of Anglican women religious in Nova Scotia the background does not support any facile optimism. The average age of Canadian nuns is steadily increasing as the majority of convent members were entrants of the 1940s. Any religious order considers itself fortunate to have postulants trickling in; many congregations have not received postulants in the last decade and numerous branch houses and even motherhouses have closed. Outright pessimism may well be premature and misleading. Yet, because records may be lost and potential sources die, the time is currently ripe to consider the history of women religious.

TABLE 1

Church Membership in Nova Scotia, 1891-1981

Year	Roman Cath.	United	Anglican
1891	122,452	162,251*	64,410
1911	145,456	170,412	75,548
1931	162,905	159,931	88,827
1951	217,978	141,152	117,602
1981	310,725	169,605	131,130

Source: Canada. Census of Canada. 1891-1981

*This figure was obtained by adding Presbyterians, 108,520, and Methodists, 53,731. The other figures in the United Church column include United, Presbyterian, and Congregational Church figures. In 1925 these denominations combined officially to become the United Church of Canada.

TABLE 2

Church Membership in Halifax County, 1891

Year	Roman Cath.	Anglican	Presbyterian	Methodist
1891	15,658	9,964	4,876	3,978

Source: Canada. Census of Canada. 1891.

TABLE 3

Number of Roman Catholic Nuns in Nova Scotia, 1946-1969
(By Diocese)

Year	Antigon.	Hfx.	Yarmouth	Total
1946	544	716	---*	1260
1950	547	852	---	1399
1955	721	780	---	1501
1960	826	558	79	1463
1965	862	795	76	1733
1969	760	800	94	1654

Source: Annunzia Pontificio. Citta Del Vaticano, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1946-1969.

*The third diocese in Nova Scotia was not created until 1956. The total for the years previous to this should have still been accurate.

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