

A vertical stained glass artwork on the left side of the page. It depicts a basket filled with various fruits, including apples and grapes, set against a background of geometric patterns and warm colors like gold, brown, and red. The style is reminiscent of early 20th-century stained glass design.

Welcome to the Martha Storyboards Virtual Albums!

*The Martha Storyboards present **highlights** of the Martha Story. For additional historical information, consult James Cameron, **And Martha Served** (2000): [And Martha Served.pdf](#)*

*The stained-glass motifs and vibrant colours of the Storyboards are inspired by the Bethany Chapel Windows [Rambusch of Canada] now located in the **Heritage Gallery**, Parkland.*

*Except when noted, historical photographs on the Storyboards have been scanned from originals in the **CSM Archives, Bethany Resource Centre**, Antigonish. Photographs on the Storyboards were edited to fit into the stained-glass designs. The original photographs, with full descriptions, are reproduced in the Storyboards Albums. [Information added by archivists, including estimated dates, indicated by square brackets].*

*When professed, Sisters chose a **religious name**. In 1967, Marthas could retain their religious name or revert to their baptismal name and surname. The Albums identify Sisters by both their religious and secular names.*

*The **Notes** suggest additional resources that are readily accessible online – many more are available at your local library. Consult the Martha website for information on current programs and activities.*

“...the Convent re-echoed with gales of laughter”: Martha Household Services and Hospitality Ministry

Bishop John Cameron co-founded the Sisters of St. Martha as a congregation of religious women dedicated to skilled domestic work in Diocesan institutions, especially St. Francis Xavier University. The Sisters transformed the College's stark "barracks", creating a "home-like" atmosphere for the young students and resident staff.

Housework in 1900 was physically exhausting. The Sisters cooked meals in heavy boilers, carting vegetables, flour and coal from the cellar, but "the meals were never late." They operated a steam laundry, with heavy mangles and washers, and handwashed the students' woolen socks and underwear. They starched and ironed the boys' shirts - 500 weekly - using hand irons heated on sweltering stoves.

Sister John Baptist (Margaret Ann) Cameron, a former superior at St. Martha's Convent, recalled: "Regardless of how heavy and fatiguing the work was, when the evening recreation came, the walls of the Convent re-echoed with gales of laughter, as Sisters related the funny episodes of the day."



In 1900, students' fees covered room and board, tuition, laundry, mending, and medical expenses, including infirmary stays and medicines.



Sr. Monica (M. Vincenta) Doyle, then 80 years old, mending X-MEN uniforms.



Mending students' socks, St. FX.



Making donuts for X students.

St. FX. University Kitchens. Cake for 700.

How pleasant was "the refectory (Students' Dining Room) with its white linen table cloths and napkins, the polished silver and cutlery, the shining glasses and earthenware..."



St. FX. purchased Mount Cameron Farm in 1907. The Marthas prepared meals for the farm workers and cared for ailing and aged clergy who chose to retire there (1907-1928).

“...the Convent re-echoed with gales of laughter”:
Martha Household Services and Hospitality Ministry

Bishop John Cameron co-founded the Sisters of St. Martha as a congregation of religious women dedicated to skilled domestic work in Diocesan institutions, especially St. Francis Xavier University. The Sisters transformed the College’s stark “*barracks*”, creating a “*home-like*” atmosphere for the young students and resident staff.

Housework in 1900 was physically exhausting. The Sisters operated the steam laundry, with its heavy mangles and washers. They handwashed the students’ woolen socks and underwear. They starched and ironed all the boys’ shirts – 500 weekly – using hand irons heated on sweltering stoves. The Marthas cooked meals in heavy boilers, carting vegetables, flour and coal from the cellar, but “*the meals were never late.*” They made the beds daily – white spreads and shams – and scrubbed the rough spruce floors. They also tended sick students in the infirmary, a precursor of their later hospital work.

Sister John Baptist (Margaret Ann) Cameron, a former superior at St. Martha’s Convent, recalled: “*Regardless of how heavy and fatiguing the work was, when the evening recreation came, the walls of the Convent re-echoed with gales of laughter, as Sisters related the funny episodes of the day or recalled amusing experiences of the past.*”



*Mending socks for St. F.X. students, St. Martha's Convent [1947] / Russell Studio (Antigonish, N.S.). In the early decades, students' fees included laundry and "mending." One source identifies **Sr. Mary Evangelista (Mary Magdalen) Curtis** as the Martha in rocking chair (right).*



Sr. Monica (Mary Vincentia) Doyle, then 80 years old, mending X-MEN uniforms, St. F.X. [1982]

St. F.X. University Kitchen

Left: Sister Pauline Marie (Martina Marie) Lichacz using the mixing machine, *St. F.X. kitchen* / Russell Studio (Antigonish, N.S). The photograph was published in a 1948 pamphlet, **And Martha Served**, with the caption “*Sister is mixing a cake that will provide a serving for more than 700 people*”.



Sister Marie Robert (Helen) Green making rolls and doughnuts, *St. F.X. kitchen* [1963]. Detail.



Sisters Ann Michael (Florence Theresa) Steele and Marie Brenda (Ellen Josephine) Grant: Novices on “milk and butter duty”, in the Bethany kitchen, 1946-1947 / Russell Studio (Antigonish, N.S.). The photograph illustrates the various stages in making butter, using milk from the Martha dairy herd.

Sister John Baptist recalled the pleasant atmosphere of the students' residences and dining room, under Martha care:

“It was indeed a pleasant sight to go through the students’ dormitories, where the soft-wood floors...were chalk-white and dustless, snowy white bedspreads and pillow shams on the nicely dressed beds... The refectory (Students’ Dining Room) with its white linen table cloths and napkins, the polished silver and cutlery, the shining glasses and earthenware, was no less attractive.”

Unpublished history, 1949



Sister Mary Magdalen (Mary Patricia) Hartigan setting a table in the Students’ Dining Room, St. F.X., Antigonish [1947-1948] / Russell Studio (Antigonish, N.S)



*Above: Mount Cameron, Home for Retired Priests, 1916
(The Land of Plenty / Tir a Phailteis), p. 16.*

In 1907, St. F.X. purchased an extensive farm overlooking Antigonish (renamed **Mount Cameron**), to provide produce for the College. As they had done at X, the Marthas provided housekeeping and meals for the farm workers. The farm adopted a second function as the **Diocesan Home for Retired Priests**, and Marthas provided care for ailing and aged clergy who chose to retire there (1907-1928).



Marthas on staff, Mount Cameron Farm [between 1907 and 1913]. Identified: Sisters Maris Stella (Catherine) MacDonald, Mary Andrew (Margaret) MacDonald*, Mary Cecilia (Mary) MacDonald, Mary Benjamina (Mary Belle) Beaton*, and Mary Agnes (Margaret) MacDonald. *Founders

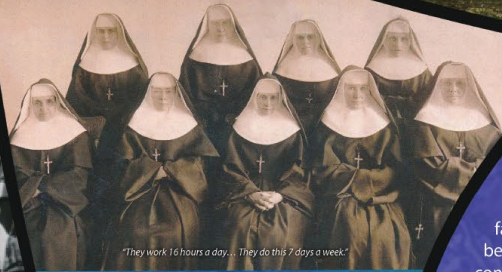
"God love the Marthas": Expanding the Household Management and Hospitality Ministry

"God love the Marthas! Excellent food, lots of it – real butter, real milk at every meal plus a milk cooler in the rec hall...they are doing a wonderful job of brightening up the atmosphere - they talk, they smile, they laugh...they add a vivacious touch to an institution sorely in need of it..."
Seminarian, Holy Heart, Halifax, 1964

St. Joseph's Hospital, a 50-bed hospital in Glace Bay, opened in 1902 and catered to many of the workers employed in the coal and steel industries. The miners supported the Hospital by a weekly check-off system on payday, one of the first workers' hospital plans in North America. The Marthas agreed to "look after the housekeeping and culinary departments", serving from 1902 to 1908.



The Marthas provided housekeeping to their many institutions. Duties included sewing, mending, and laundry; cooking, baking and dietary services; scrubbing, cleaning and disinfecting, as well as purchasing, inventory control and staff supervision.



St. Augustine's Seminary, Toronto, was founded in 1913 to educate priests for Canadian parishes. The Seminary requested the Marthas to provide household services; this became their first ministry outside Antigonish Diocese. The Marthas later extended their household ministries to Holy Heart Seminary, Halifax (1964-70) and St. Pius X High School, Ottawa (1961-78).

Mentoring the Marthas, P.E.I (1915-1921): The Antigonish Marthas, under Mother M. Stanislaus (Mary Ann) MacDonald mentored a new community of religious women, established to provide household services to students and faculty at the Island's Catholic university, St. Dunstan's. The P.E.I. Marthas became an independent order in 1921. Mother Stanislaus is considered their Foundress.



The Martha Cookbook



The Martha Cookbook was published in 1980 by the St. Martha Household Services Association, a group that originated in the Homemakers' Institutes, organized by the Marthas in the 1960s.

God love the Marthas”:

Expanding the Household Management and Hospitality Ministry

“God love the Marthas! Excellent food, lots of it – real butter, real milk at every meal plus a milk cooler in the rec hall...they are doing a wonderful job of brightening up the atmosphere - they talk, they smile, they laugh...they add a vivacious touch to an institution sorely in need of it...”

Seminarian, Holy Heart, Halifax, 1964

In 1964, **Holy Heart Seminary** welcomed the Marthas to manage its domestic services. Prior to Vatican II, the Seminary had been a somber institution; seminarians were restricted to campus and meals were eaten in silence. The injection of **Martha Hospitality** reflected the reinterpretation of the role of religious in society. The Marthas served until the closure of the seminary in 1970.



Holy Heart Seminary, Halifax, was established in 1895. An Archdiocesan institution, the Seminary educated candidates from the Maritimes for the priesthood. The Seminary was succeeded by the ecumenical **Atlantic School of Theology**. Postcard scan courtesy of the McCord Museum, Montreal (P.Q.)



St. Joseph's Hospital, a 50-bed hospital in **Glace Bay**, opened in 1902 and catered to workers employed in the Cape Breton coal and steel industries. The miners supported the Hospital by a weekly check-off system on payday, one of the first workers' hospital plans in North America. The Marthas agreed to "*look after the housekeeping and culinary departments,*" serving from 1902 to 1908. **Photograph:** "*St. Joseph's Hospital, Glace Bay, C.B.*" / The Cape Breton Post Card Co. (Sydney, N.S) [ca. 1905].

A Touch Of Martha Humour

In formal portraits of the era, subjects posed with objects that highlighted their status and power. Women were often photographed amid books and works of art, indicating their refinement and culture. In this rare 1906 snapshot, the Marthas at St. Joseph's Hospital display everyday tools and supplies as their chosen symbols: a broom and dustpan, sewing machine, eggbeater, even a ham.

The photograph is taken in the sewing room, Nurses' Home, Glace Bay, Sept. 1906: 1. Sr.

M. Theodore (Julia) Sampson* 2. Sr. M. Francis (Elizabeth) MacAdam (injured)*.

3. Sr. M. Potens (Mary Anastasia)

Landry* 4. Sr. Joseph Agatha (Mary

Joseph) Hines, curing a ham. 5. Sr. Mary Angela (Catherine Jane) MacNeil, making

dessert. 6. Mother M. Innocentia

(Caroline) MacNamara*, superior, at sewing machine.

**Founders.*



The numbers are written on the original photograph; the Sisters are identified by number in the album.

The Marthas provided housekeeping services to their many institutions. Duties included sewing, mending, and laundry; cooking, baking and dietary services; scrubbing, cleaning and disinfecting, as well as purchasing, inventory control and staff supervision.



*Unidentified Martha and five hospital staff
washing and pressing linens, Laundry
Department, **St. Michael's General
Hospital**, Lethbridge, 1947*



Sr. Anne Dorothy (Margaret) MacDonald at sewing machine, Sewing and Mending Room, St. Michael's General Hospital, Lethbridge, 1947. Detail.



Sister Rita Anthony (Josephine) MacKinnon and staff, Housekeeping Department, St. Michael's General Hospital, Lethbridge, 1958-1959.



St. Augustine's Seminary, Toronto, opened in 1913 to train English-speaking priests for Canada. Like most colleges at that time, the seminary included a large farm. The Seminary requested the Marthas to provide the same household services as they did at St. F.X. This was the first ministry for the Marthas outside Antigonish Diocese, and they served there until 2002.

“They work 16 hours a day with no rest or sleep period. They do this 7 days a week.”



The Marthas extended their household ministries to **Holy Heart Seminary**, Halifax (1964-1970) and **St. Pius X High School**, Ottawa, a junior seminary (1961-1978).

First Martha Sisters on staff, St. Augustine's Seminary, Toronto, Aug. 1913.

Seated: *Sisters Mary Theodore (Julia) Sampson*, Mary Dorothy (Isabel) Beaton*, Mother Mary Faustina (Mary) MacArthur* (Superior), Francis de Salle (Annie) MacLellan, Mary Andrew (Margaret) MacDonald*.*

Standing: *Sisters Mary Teresa (Mary) Landry, Mary Alphonsus (Mary Katie) MacLellan, Mary Jovita (Margaret) MacArthur*, Mary Remegius (Laura) MacArthur**

**Founders*



*Mother Mary Stanislaus (1882-1970)
South Side Harbour, Antigonish Co.*

Mentoring the Marthas, P.E.I. (1915-1921): The Antigonish Marthas, under **Mother M. Stanislaus (Mary Ann) MacDonald**, mentored a new community of religious women, established to provide household services to students and faculty at the Island's Catholic university, St. Dunstan's. The P.E.I. Marthas became an independent order in 1921. Mother Stanislaus is considered their Foundress.



St. Dunstan's University. Charlottetown. Prince Edward Island.

The Marthas' Ministry, The Cardinal's Residence, Toronto

In 1935, **Archbishop James C. McGuigan** – later the first Anglophone Canadian Cardinal - invited the Marthas to run his household in Toronto. He had initially met the Marthas while a priest-professor at St. Dunstan's (1918-9).



The Palace of Archbishop James C. McGuigan, York Mills, Ontario.

The Marthas attended to the Cardinal's household for 39 years. Marthas studying in Toronto often resided in the McGuigan house. The Marthas also provided housekeeping for the Bishops of Antigonish, when requested.



Marthas in front of the McGuigan Palace, 1957.

Identified: Sisters Ann Cornelius (Elizabeth) Beaton, Anna Mary (Catherine Maureen) Butler, Anna Maureen (Lillian Isabel) Chisholm, and Marie Therese (Minnie May) Richard.

The Martha Cookbook



The Martha Cookbook was published in 1980 (with a third reprint in 1982) by the **St. Martha Household Services Association**, an organization that originated in the **Homemakers' Institutes**, organized by the Marthas in the 1960s. **Sr. Mary Henry (Christina) Chiasson**, chair, Martha cookbook committee, is holding a copy of the cookbook, Bethany, Antigonish, 1986. A former dietician at St. Michael's Hospital (Lethbridge), Sr. Chiasson had taught home economics for many years in Dominion (1949-64) and New Waterford (1970-77).

Notes

The description of housekeeping duties at St. F. X. is based on “*Household Management*”/ Sr. John Baptist Cameron in **Sixty Years Deo Soli** (1969), p. 32. In the early decades, student fees included tuition, room and board, infirmary charges, medical expenses, laundry and mending. Explore: [*The Calendar of the University of St. Francis Xavier’s College, Antigonish, N.S.*](#) (1900)

The letter from the Holy Heart seminarian (Dan Doucet) is quoted in J. Cameron, p. 246-7. For a brief history of **Holy Heart Seminary** (Halifax), see Carol Ann Goodine, [*Origins of Atlantic School of Theology*](#) (PhD, 1993)

For additional archival images of **St. Augustine’s Seminary**, Scarborough, see: [*The Archivist's Pencil: A Look Back at a Scarborough Landmark: St. Augustine's Seminary*](#)

For additional information on the early history of **P.E.I. Marthas**, see Heidi MacDonald, [*The Social Origins and Congregational Identity of PEI Marthas 1915-1925.pdf*](#).



Design by Sr. Irene Doyle