

A History of St. Augustine's Church, Dundas, Ontario

The mother church of the Diocese of Hamilton

The oldest parish between Toronto and Windsor

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I. THE PIONEERS

The first Catholic priests to visit the site of Dundas may well have been Father Jean de Brebeuf in 1626, and, somewhat later, Father Louis Hennepin, who is said to have accompanied the famous French explorer, La Salle, in his exploration of this area, between 1668 and 1671. Probably because of the wetness of the terrain La Salle and Hennepin called this vicinity New Flanders. However no known European settlement or lasting missionary work followed for over a century.

Catholic priests probably visited the Niagara area steadily from 1783 onwards, largely because the British Army units included many Catholic Irish and Highland Scots, but there were no parishes. The entire area was within the Bishopric of Quebec, even after the establishment of Upper Canada in 1791. Ken Foyster has reported the tradition that in the autumn of 1819 two settlers in Trafalgar Tp. (Bartholomew O'Connor and Charles O'Hara) walked the forty miles to Dundas to persuade a Fr. O'Reilly to visit their area to present the sacraments and celebrate Mass in Mr. O'Hara's cabin. Since there was not yet a priest resident in Dundas, this suggests (if true) that the chaplain from Niagara made the occasional side trip from Dundas to Trafalgar before returning to Niagara.

Perhaps because of such requests for a priest, on December 30, 1820 the Rev. Alexander MacDonnell of Kingston was appointed by Quebec to be Vicar Apostolic for all of Upper Canada. He designated a Fr. Connor to service Niagara and the Head of the Lake. Fr. Connor is said to have visited Dundas regularly from 1821 onward, to have said Mass and to have performed marriages and baptisms in private homes.

He may have ranged as widely as Trafalgar, where a log church was constructed in 1823.

In 1826 Kingston was established as the first bishopric in Upper Canada, with Rev. MacDonnell as Bishop. It is said to have been the first English-speaking diocese in the British Empire. (Catholics were not "emancipated" in the British Isles until 1829.) In the following winter Bishop MacDonnell made a long reconnaissance of his diocese, - almost two thousand miles he estimated - as far as present Windsor

and the Lake Huron and Lake Simcoe shores. He was distressed to note the number of immigrant Catholics who were joining other churches. As he recorded it, "I had the consolation of seeing 55 persons baptized, instructed and prepared 208 persons for the sacraments and rescued 114 from the fangs of the Methodists who are making dreadful havoc among them." To help organize his vast diocese he set up a mission parish in Dundas, with Father James Campion, who had just been ordained in 1827, and was the new military chaplain at Newark (Niagara-on-the-Lake), as Apostolic Missionary. (Dundas was then the largest community at The Head of the Lake.)

Father Campion built a small wooden (log?) chapel, probably towards the Hatt Street end of Memorial Square. (It is not known whether or not this first chapel was dedicated to St. Augustine.) His parish, if we may call it that, was immense, when one considers that he had to move around by horseback or horse-and-wagon. The records for his first year indicated 9 baptisms in Dundas, 4 in Guelph, and 21 in the Scottish Thomas Talbot Tract along the Talbot Road (now highway 3), including 8 in St. Thomas and 7 in Port Talbot. In the next year, 1828, he covered the same areas and Niagara, and had 21 baptisms in Guelph alone.

It is estimated that Dundas had a population of 500 at the time, with at least as many more in the rural parts of the parish. In 1827, the same year that Father Campion built the chapel in Dundas, the parish of the Church of Our Lady was established in Guelph. For some ten years the priest in Dundas referred to himself as the pastor of the parish churches of Dundas and Guelph. In those earliest years Guelph appears to have been the larger of the two towns. The pastor shuttled back and forth between the two, as well as making the necessary extended trips. Father Campion remained the roving chaplain until the middle of 1830 when he left for Kingston, and handed over the exhausting task to Fr. John Cullen.

Who were the pioneer Catholics of this area? The parish records give us an indication. The names recorded the most often in the Dundas parish records for 1827-30, for Baptisms, Marriages, and Interrments (Burials), including the sponsors and witnesses, were: Campbell - 11 mentions, McMahon - 10, Cammel - 8, O'Keef - 7, Charie, MacDonnell, McEvoy, and Walsh - 6 each, Brady, Delene, Kennedy, and Ryan - 5 each, Daly and LeDuc - 4, Ascelin, Case, Crooks, Downey, Kinsella, McKeon, McKerman, O'Neil, and Reid - 3 mentions each. The names most frequently given in Baptism were, for boys: John 7,

Thomas 3, Francis, James, and Joseph 2 each; for girls: Mary 5, Margaret 3, Catharine, Elizabeth, and Julianna 2 each.

Life was hard. Epidemics were always a threat. Of the four burials listed for 1832, three were caused by cholera which raged in the vicinity that summer. Most grim must have been the many interments of young children, who often died in infancy. In 1861 ten of the nineteen were for persons under eight years of age. Probably the worst case of such suffering was that endured by the King family in July and August 1864, who lost three children to diphtheria in twelve days. Parents could never be confident that their children would survive to maturity. Teen agers often died of consumption. There were no long wakes; the deceased were buried within one or two days of death. Perhaps because women were not yet “persons”, only men were called upon to be witnesses to a burial; in contrast, for baptisms and marriages one man and one woman normally served as sponsors or witnesses.

In 1831 the Dundas pastor was still servicing Dundas, Guelph and Waterloo, London and St. Thomas, and Niagara as far as Chippawa and gravelly Bay (Port Colborne). Father Cullen is also reported to have been in Penatang in 1831, although this doesn't appear in his records. This entailed a life of almost continual travelling by horse and buggy, as the following history for Father Cullen for 1831 indicates:

January 1 - 25 - in Dundas	June 19 - 21 - Dundas
Jan. 19 - Feb. - the London area	June 29 - Hamilton
March 8 & 9 - in Dundas	August 5 - Dundas
March 12 - 14 - in Guelph	Aug 7 - 14 - Guelph
March 21 - April 3 - Niagara	Aug 14 - Sept 4 - Dundas
April 19 - Guelph	Sept 12 - 17 Niagara & St. Catharines
May 3 - London	Sept 25 - 26 - Guelph
May 10 - 12 - St. Thomas	October 5 - Dundas
May 23 - Dundas	October 16 - St. Catharines
May 30 - June 8 - Niagara & Chippawa	November 27 - Guelph
June 12 - 17 - Guelph & Waterloo	December 18 - Niagara

If Father Cullen was visiting Trafalgar every four months (as has been reported) those visits do not show up in this itinerary, which is based on recorded marriages (3) and baptisms. There were no interments listed because funerals could not be delayed until the arrival of a priest. There were no recorded baptisms

along the way. It took at least two days to go from Dundas to London, therefore one can only conclude that there were few people living along those roads, or that Father Cullen could not stop to give the sacraments.

As this list also shows, the London area dropped out of the records in May 1831; presumably a chaplain was appointed there. One year later Niagara dropped out also, presumably with its own chaplain or pastor. Father Cullen, lasted only two years in this position, but is claimed to have been the first resident pastor in Dundas. However his predecessor, Father Campion, has also been referred to as being resident in Dundas, and it is probable that given his incessant travelling, he must have had some sort of residence in his central post. Still, as the list indicates, each could spend only short periods of time in Dundas. Also in 1831 a small cemetery (2 acres) was opened between the northern end of Market Street; and the (later) railway track; it was closed in 1896, although the occasional burial was held there as late as 1905. Father Cullen is said to have built a church (the ancestor of Our Lady's?) in Guelph in 1833, but he did not stay there. In 1844 he returned to his native Ireland. In 1850 he recrossed the ocean to become the pastor in Guelph for two years, and later followed the tide of settlement northward towards Mount Forest..

The new Apostolic Missionary was Father John Cassidy (newly ordained in 1831), who is credited with having built a more permanent church, the "old" St. Augustine's, in his first year, 1832. Since he came in the middle of the year, it is possible that the construction was begun under the tenure of Father Cullen. In meeting the costs of construction they may well have been helped by Lady MacNab, formerly Mary Elizabeth Stuart, who had just married (Sir) Allen MacNab in September 1831 and come to live in Hamilton, which had no Catholic church at the time. She is reported to have attended the official opening of this church, riding in a lumber wagon. A regular wagon service was set up at Queen Street, the western town limits of Hamilton, to carry worshipers to the new St. Augustine's in Dundas. Lady MacNab is said to have attended faithfully.

There appear to be only two drawings of this church. By far the better of the two is a lithograph of the town in 1848, which shows a church oriented north-south, with a square-topped "steeple" at its northern (King Street) end, and with four tall, narrow windows along the side of the nave. The other is a watercolour by M. G. Stark, titled "Dundas 1850". This sketch gives little detail but does show a sharply-

pointed steeple on top of the tower. If true, this tells us that the steeple was added in the two years between the two drawings, and suggests that the cross on top of the steeple may have been the highest man-made point in the town. Descriptions of the time inform us that the church was constructed of wood (“frame”), as was the notable steeple (which, in 1848, resembled closely the tower of the present church). The church was crowded by the new Elgin Hotel, as both pictures show. It is probable that sometime in the 1840's a brick rectory was built at the northern (King Street) end of the church. (In later years this rectory may have become a part of the old Cowper Hardware Store, which was itself replaced recently by the Canada Trust Building). Early in 1833 Father Cassidy bought a house to serve as a rectory in Guelph, but he rarely used it. He too returned to Ireland in 1844.

Like his predecessors and successors Father Cassidy was Irish. One of the more interesting aspects of the records is the attempts made by the priests to record names. They obviously wrote them phonetically, so that even for the Irish names there were frequent variations in spelling. At times the last name of an infant was spelled differently than that of its father. The prominent Hayes family had its name spelled Haise, Hayse, Heyes, Hays, and Hayes. But that was minor compared to what happened to French or worse yet, German names. Anyone wishing to trace genealogies should beware! Once in Waterloo the Rev. Cassidy just listed the parents as “German parents” and the sponsors as “German sponsors”.

In early 1838 the partnership with Guelph was ended as Rev. Thomas Gilbey became the pastor for Guelph and Waterloo. By now Hamilton was growing more rapidly than Dundas; Fr. Cassidy was listing his parish as Dundas and Hamilton. He occasionally said Mass in the old engine house on King William Street in Hamilton. In 1838 there were 17 baptisms in Dundas, but 51 in Hamilton. At the end of that year the two were separated and Hamilton gained its own parish, St. Mary's, with Rev. William MacDonald as first resident priest. Dundas was now for a short time responsible for the Grand River Valley, notably Brantford, Indiana, and Cayuga, all busy places on the new Grand River Canal, Paris, and beyond as far as Woodstock. Also in 1838 Father John Fox, who had been ordained in 1836, became pastor in Dundas. In these early years the pastors were always young priests from Ireland, who rarely remained more than two years. It is probable that few of the priests could long endure the constant travelling and hardships of the position. (As late as 1874 Bishop Crinnon made a special trip to Ireland to recruit priests for the Hamilton Diocese.)

There were several significant events in the 1840's. After only two years as pastor Father Fox died suddenly in September 1840. A five year gap in the records followed. Officially Revs. Robert Mills (1840-42) and James O'Flynn served as the Dundas pastors, but there is no mention of Father Mills in the Dundas parish records. Yet, according to the Toronto Archdiocesan Archives, Father O'Flynn paid Father Mills a visit, presumably in Dundas, on March 24, 1842, and "announced himself" as the future pastor of Dundas. In the records Father Mills wrote "I have taken a house at Brantford and will move there whenever the roads will allow me to send off my furniture". When Bishop Powers held his first synod in Toronto in October of that year, Father O'Flynn was listed in attendance, as the pastor of St. Augustine's. Father Mills was now listed in the Brantford records as pastor of Brantford. Still, a few words should be given to Father Mills, who was a truly interesting character. Born in Dublin in 1798 he was unusually old for this task. He was originally an Anglican but converted in 1818, came to Kingston in 1838, to Dundas in 1840, and served subsequently in Brantford, St. Thomas & London, and in Adjala Township (east of Orangeville). He was renowned as a great preacher, and was often invited to give the official address at dedicatory functions. However "he had one failing for which his faculties were withdrawn." In a part of the world and at a time when hard-drinking was considered to be normal, one can't help but wonder what that "failing" could have been. He left Canada West and ended his days as a Trappist monk in the Gethsemane Monastery, Kentucky.

The Brantford records reveal one interesting event during his tenure there. In June 1843 a John Long married Mary Casidy, only to have the marriage subsequently ruled null and void. It came out that Mr. Long had already been married in Limerick, Ireland, and that that wife had followed him to Canada and was living in the Corktown section of Hamilton. As Father Mills so quaintly put it, "he (Mr. Long) imposed himself as an unmarried man."

In 1841, in the middle of this "interregnum", Toronto was established as a new diocese and Dundas was within its territory; the bishop was now close by. Father O'Flynn then served as pastor from 1842 to 1845, but only kept records of marriages, and those only until May 1843. To help him manage the huge parish, Rev. Peter Connolly was appointed to "the Mission of Dundas and to the neighbouring "missions" of Oakville, Wellington Square, Trafalgar, etc." Father Connolly served only from May 1843 to October 1844 and then he also returned to Ireland. (What was happening in Ireland in 1844? Perhaps the crushing in 1843 of the campaign to Repeal the Act of Union, of Britain and Ireland, led the Irish church to call its priests home.) On May 2, 1845 Rev. Patrick O'Dwyer took over the parish and the full records resumed.

However, there was no further mention of an assistant. In May 1846 Lady MacNab died, thus removing a major friend.

II. THE GREAT BUILDER

The most important event in the 1840s was undoubtedly the arrival in January 1847 of Rev. John O'Reilly, (born in 1818 in Co. Cavan, Ireland, and ordained in 1846) whom I am tempted to call O'Reilly the Great; he served as pastor for a crucial 37 years until 1884, a span of time remarkable in that century.

His long tenure began in a time of great difficulties. The Irish potato famine (1846-49) was at its height, and 1847 was the peak year for the emigration of destitute Irish to Canada. A typhus epidemic broke out in the emergency quarters in Toronto. Desperate for help, Bishop Michael Powers (who himself died of typhus on October 1) ordered priests from outside Toronto to assist in the care of the sick. Father John is reported to have ministered to "an average 45 people a day for 14 straight weeks, until he was too sick to move". As mentioned by Bishop Carbery in his eulogy, Father O'Reilly "fell victim to the malady (typhus), but thanks to his youth he recovered." As a result there were no entries in the Dundas records from July 11 to Sept. 27, 1847.

In exchange for the loss of Brantford and the Grand River Valley in 1840 (effectively 1842), Dundas was officially given responsibility for the Trafalgar-Oakville-Streetsville-Milton area. This lasted until 1858, and entailed considerable difficulty before the construction of the railways in 1854. Several times a year Father O'Reilly made a swing to the east, by horse and carriage, remaining for several days in each locality to perform the baptisms and marriages, and when possible, the interments.. As the population increased steadily in the Oakville area, it became obvious that Father would require assistance. To help out, Father Vincent Bardou was assigned as his assistant from November 1857 to February 1859. Oakville had had a rough chapel since 1821, a church since 1845, but did not become a separate parish until September 1858.

Soon after he arrived Father O'Reilly purchased the present site of the church, and began formulating plans for the building of a new, much larger St. Augustine's. However priority had to be given to the erection of a school for the Catholic children. This, the first local separate school, was completed on the new site in 1857; it served 105 children.. The new Hamilton Diocese was established in 1856 and it is likely that the new Bishop Farrell had advised Father O'Reilly that since he already had a functioning church, the school should be built first. (That original stone school building now forms the oldest part of the rectory; within a few years, 1869, the school was moved to its present location.)

In January 1863 the old St. Augustine's burnt down in a spectacular fire which also destroyed the Elgin stables and some houses on Hatt Street. Several witnesses commented on the fact that the steeple stood up until the church was consumed, and then settled straight down into the flames. As could be expected, no records were kept between January 3 and February 1 of that year. Father O'Reilly began work immediately on his dream, the new Gothic church on the hill. Despite stories that it was hard to get men to work on the construction, it was finished in the remarkable time of eleven months, which suggests that the plans must have been all set even before the fire. Bishop Farrell dedicated the new church on December 4. (During the time of construction, Mass was said in the school.) On April 16, 1866 the remains of Reverend John Fox, the only priest who had died (in 1840) as the pastor of St. Augustine's, were "translated and reinterred" in the northern part of the transept of the new church.

Of course it took many years to complete. Dr. F. Crinnon, the Bishop of Hamilton, consecrated the new marble altar on December 19, 1874. He proclaimed an indulgence of 100 days on that day, for all who had confessed and received the blessed Sacrament. Further, the same indulgence would be granted each year on the anniversary of that date. Presumably that indulgence is still operative on every December 19.

At first the church lacked the imposing bell tower, but this was added soon, and the bell, purchased for \$700 (with a \$500 bequest from Patrick Bannon of Beverly), built by Meneely Co. Foundry in West Troy, N.Y, and dedicated to Michael the Archangel, was blessed by Bishop Crinnon and installed on October 1, 1876. Officially mentioned as being present were the following men, presumably the "pillars of the church": A. Wardell, John Enright, William Enright, John Peters, John Callihan, John Heffernan, Bartholomey O'Connors, Patrick Cain, W. Casey, Patrick Cass, John Peters, John McManamy, and Thomas Hickey. One assumes that many other - unmentioned - parishioners were present as well. The

new bell was tolled for the first time on October 15 for Mrs. Bourke, aged 76, who had immigrated from County Meath, Ireland, and died on October 13. The tower initially had four high turrets, but after these were destroyed by lightning, the present lower turrets were added.

As the population grew and Father O'Reilly aged, various priests helped out for short periods of time. Father Edward Heenan appeared briefly in 1864. Fr. William Lillis assisted Father John from October 1874 to August 1877, at which time he became the resident pastor in Freelton; he returned to Ireland in 1882. Father Francis (Frank) O'Reilly served for one month in 1878. He was followed by Rev. Peter Lennon who was an assistant in the cathedral in Hamilton, but helped Father John. (As archivist I remember him well for his indecipherable handwriting!.) Finally in 1881 came Father John Joseph Feeny who was assisting when Father O'Reilly died.

Confederation year 1867 marked 40 years since the formation of the parish and 20 years since the great immigration of those fleeing the Irish famine. In the records for 1867 the most frequently mentioned family names were: Haise (Hayes) - 12, Burns - 11, Sullivan - 10, Duggan and Kelley - 9, Higgins, McGloughlin, and O'Neil-7 Costelloe, Cummings, Fahey, Hickey, Lahey, and Looney - 6, Heffrenan, Hogan, Hourigan, and Moore - 5 each. Also on the list with 3 were the Freels who founded Freelton. Catholics were especially numerous in Flamboro West along the Brock Road, known locally as "Little Ireland". The corner of the 5th concession had a functioning post office named Hayesland after the Hayes family. A further band of Catholic settlers extended through Beverly to Copetown, and in the "Scotchblock" (around Carluke) of Ancaster. There was a notable cluster of Francophones, with the Gravelle family as its core, in Greensville and Beverly.

For several years a Separate School was located on the Brock Road between the 5th and 6th concessions. The first teacher was, as usual, a single young lady, Miss Bridget Brown, but "owing to the great number of boys attending the school, it was considered advisable to engage a male teacher, as an experiment." A British army pensioner, Mr. Patrick Brady, was hired, and became noted for falling asleep at his desk during classes. The pretty Miss Mary Kelly followed, but soon resigned to marry the local Thomas Hayes.

The baptismal names given to boys in 1867 were: James - 12, John - 8, Joseph and Michael - 5, Charles, George, Thomas, and William - 4, Francis and Louis - 3.(Joseph, Charles, and Louis were used

mostly by the French.) Names given to girls were: Mary - 17, Catherine and Elizabeth - 7, Bridget and Ellen - 6, Margaret - 4. One of the more interesting aspects of these listings is the absence of Patrick. Among the male immigrants from Ireland Patrick was clearly the most common name. Yet, once they were in Canada these men named their sons James and John, the same as did the non-Catholics. Such typically Irish names as Maurice, Jeremiah, and Cornelius almost vanished as well. In contrast the girls generally received the same names as their mothers or godmothers.

The late 1870s and early '80s were a decade of transition as the era of the pioneers came to an end. The many "famine Irish" immigrants were aging and passing from the scene. Those who died often had their aged colleagues act as witnesses at the funerals. One, Thomas Cantillon, a "native of Ireland" served in this way at many burials, until he himself died at the age of 80 in 1883.

It may have been the problems involved in the aging of the population that led Father John McNulty (McNulty) to establish the House of Providence in 1879. He bought the former estate and mansion of James Coleman, which had been built in 1870 (after a fire had destroyed a previous dwelling), and then sold to the Methodists in 1874 to become the Dundas Wesleyan Institute. This beautiful house overlooked the crossing of Spencer's Creek by the Governor's Road. It had been damaged internally by the actions of the young boys who stayed there, and Fr. McNulty was able to obtain it for \$10,000, still a large sum for the time. From his life's savings (in Caledonia and elsewhere) he was able to pay \$8,000 in cash. To help obtain the needed extra funds, the first of the annual House of Providence picnics was held in the summer of that year, and raised \$1,500. Father O'Reilly and Bishop Crinnon are said to have helped as well. The House was promptly deeded to the Sisters of St. Joseph, who had been invited into the Hamilton area in 1852.

The first male resident was Daniel Fields, a former reeve of Dundas; the first female Mrs. Witty of Waterdown. In 1880 several more old people were transferred to the House from Hamilton. Clearly the House was considered to be a fine place to live, and was open to persons outside of the parish. In its earlier years the House served as an orphanage and perhaps as an emergency medical centre, as well as a seniors residence. (Bishop Carbery had been more interested in setting up an orphanage than a home for seniors.) Records for the ten months March 30 - Dec 31, 1883 show that there were 15 deaths at the House: 8 were for persons over 62 years old, but 5 were for under 7 years old. The orphanage was to be limited to boys, but one of the young "males" who died was listed as "Elizabeth." The orphans remained

in the House until its destruction in a great fire in 1900. In 1902 they were moved to the St. Joseph house in Hamilton.

Two priests were buried from St. Augustines in 1882: Rev. John Cullen on Feb. 10, and Rev. John McAnulty on Oct. 3. Father John Cullen had been the second pastor of the church (1829-32) and had returned to Ireland in 1844. As already stated, he returned to Canada in 1850. He “retired to his farm in Peel County in 1864” and came to the House of Providence when it opened. He was buried on the lawn of the House. Father McAnulty (McNulty) had had no recorded connection with St. Augustines, (besides serving in Caledonia, he had built the first church in Dunnville) but was certainly also at “his” House of Providence when he died.

Father O’Reilly knew one last day of glory. In May 1883 the “new altar” was blessed by the Rev. Dean O’Reilly. Very Rev. Father Dowling, the Administrator of the diocese, preached two exultent sermons, and a choir sang Mozart’s Twelfth Mass, and much other music. There were so many visitors from Hamilton that the H & D Railway (affectionately known as the Dummy line), had its evening return to Hamilton delayed until the evening service was concluded.

This “new altar” was actually the altar piece, or reredo, which was installed above the marble altar, which had itself been blessed in 1874. It was in Gothic style (as was the church), in white and gold. In the middle of the tall central pinnacle was a statue of St. Augustine, and the figures of two angels flanking the central spire. Two lower side pinnacles contained statues of the four evangelists. Specks of gold were added to the marble altar to blend in with the altarpiece. In addition the vestry was painted and the ceiling “stenciled” by the firm of Walker Bros. ”Steamed radiators” and pews were introduced in 1883 as well, perhaps in time for this celebration.

Father O’Reilly was now becoming rather old himself, and after almost 38 years of difficult service was clearly becoming weaker. His assistant, Father John Joseph Feeny was taking on more and more of the duties. The last two functions Father O’Reilly performed were two baptisms on October 5, 1884. It is probable that he was moved to the House of Providence, where he died on Friday, November 14, 1884. The body was honoured in the “chappelle ardente” in the House of Providence and was then moved on Sunday to St. Augustine’s, where it lay in state before the main altar.

The funeral was a most impressive affair, celebrated by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Carbery, and the Very Rev. T. J. Dowling (the next bishop), and attended by dozens of priests. As the Hamilton Spectator reported it, “The venerable Dean O’Reilly was buried this morning in St. Augustine’s Church, in conformity with a request, expressed shortly before his death, that his remains might rest in the church in which he had laboured.” He was placed to the side of the sanctuary, roughly below the lectern now used by the cantors. He had instructed that whatever was left of his means, after paying the funeral expenses, was to go to the House of Providence. He had known four bishops in his noteworthy career: Bishop Powers of Toronto had placed him in Dundas, Bishop Farrell had blessed his new church, Bishop Crinnon had blessed the new altar, and Bishop Carbery had pronounced his eulogy. The assistant, Father Feeny, served as acting pastor until the end of May 1885, when Father John Keough (Kehoe) was appointed as the new pastor.

With the death of Father O’Reilly the era of the establishment of the parish was over. Except for Ancaster and Freelton, the parish limits were close to what they now are. The school and the House of Providence were functioning. The church itself, the greatest monument to Father O’Reilly, stood completed except for some of the desired decoration. The change may even be noted in the records. The old manuscript-type records, with their difficult handwriting, were replaced by modern ledgers. The ties to the past were by no means severed though, as two of the former assistants to Father O’Reilly later became pastors: Father Heenan (1889 - 1908), and Father Feeny (1909 - 1921).

III. THE CHURCH COMPLETED

Gradually the church was brought to full completion. A century ago most churches included a small chapel, which could be used for weekday Masses, adoration, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament. St. Augustine’s was no exception. The chapel was added to the side of the sanctuary, so that worshippers could face the tabernacle. It is unknown whether this was part of the original construction, or was added sometime later. In 1886 Bishop Carbery granted permission for the erection of Stations of the Cross in “Holy Family Chapel”. Given the small size of the chapel (if the same “chapel” is meant) these could not be the stations now in the nave of the church, since those are far too large. This former chapel now serves as the sacristy, where the priest vests for Mass.

Also in 1886 a beautiful side altar, with exquisite wood carving, dedicated to the Sacred Heart, was added to the left (the south) of the main altar, below the present statue of Our Lady. The dedicatory plaque, which was placed next to the altar, stated: "This altar was erected in 1886 by John McManamy of Beverly, in memory of his beloved parents, :Patrick and Bridget McManamy, who died in April and September 1872, being married 56 years". Since this was used as the Altar of Repose on Holy Thursday evening, a lovely sanctuary lamp was hung above it. An altar to Our Lady was added, probably around the same time, to the right hand (north) side of the main altar.

FIRE. Almost every one of the old churches of Dundas has been destroyed by fire at least once in its history. As stated above St. Augustines had burned down in 1863. Two great fires occurred within two years of each other at the turn of the century. On October 4, 1900 the House of Providence was destroyed by fire. The fire began at 3:45 p.m. in the barn and quickly spread to the house. Rumors had it that the cause was either that an old man had gone into the barn to have a smoke, or that the boys, who were "enjoying a half holiday" from school, had been playing with matches in the barn. "The old men were taken to the Town Hall for the night, while the children were transferred to St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum in Hamilton until further arrangements can be made for their assistance".

Although the energetic Fathers McAnulty (McNulty) and O'Reilly were no longer alive, the reconstruction of the House was begun immediately and completed within two years. The new home was larger than the destroyed house, and had 160 rooms. It cost \$70,000, \$10,000 of which was covered by insurance on the previous house. There must have been other contributions, but the Sisters were left with a debt of \$25,000. The new House was opened with a Picnic on July 1, 1902.

Then in 1902 the school was almost totally destroyed by fire. It was promptly replaced with a brick school. However, the orphans were not returned to the House of Providence, but rather were placed with the Sisters of St. Joseph in Hamilton. Perhaps the rumors that the boys may have been involved in the major fires convinced the local parish that the orphans would best be placed elsewhere.

We are fortunate to have the note books for Sunday announcements kept by Msgr. Heenan 1904-1908. These give us an insight into some of the parish life of the time. Like many pastors Father Heenan was much concerned about money. Curiously, it was the "pew rent" which drew the most attention. It is clear that certain families were able to rent specific pews, and became quite upset if non-renters sat in

“their” pews. (“Unrented pews” bore red tickets.) Yet, the figures given for a period of eight weeks in 1908 show that the pew rent raised only some 2% of the total income. Lists of “contributors” were often published. There were special collections: Christmas and Easter; an annual collection for Ecclesiastical Education (the seminary) and for the House of Providence (the church was assessed \$50 for the two combined); for Indian missions, and the missions in Africa; and Peter’s Pence.

The principal parish organizations were: the Altar Society (which had to be resuscitated), the Promoters of the Holy League, the Apostolate of Prayer, the 3rd Order of St. Francis, the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Young Men’s (Athletic) Association, and the Ladies’ Benevolent Society. There were novenas to the Sacred Heart, to the Holy Ghost, and - interestingly - to St. Francis Xavier. Indulgences, particularly Plenary Indulgences, were heavily emphasized.

Like Fathers Fox and O’Reilly before him, Msgr. Heenan died “at his post”. He had long been suffering from “a painful illness” (cancer?). In April 1908 as the pain became acute he entered St. Joseph’s Hospital. He was operated on and died on April 13, the Tuesday of Holy Week. His remains were brought into the church on Easter afternoon, and he was buried on the following day, April 20. As the Dundas Star reported it, “never in the history of the Valley Town have so many representatives of the Roman Catholic clergy been present”. He had been born in adjacent Haldimand County and had been pastor of St. Augustine’s for almost 20 years. “The remains were interred in a vault in the southwest portion of the church, inside the sanctuary”. (I do not know precisely where beneath the sanctuary this “vault” is located.)

Thus three of the pastors were buried within (under) the church. When Father J. J. Feeny, the next pastor with a long tenure, died in 1921, he was buried in the “new” St. Augustine’s Cemetery on top of the hill south of the creek. A small, low cross in the first row of stones marks his grave..

The stained glass windows were added over a period of at least 50 years, although most of them seem to have been inserted during two intense times of redecoration in 1911 and 1917. Listed in the Dundas Star for November 16, 1911 were the following:

The Holy Family	Donated by Elizabeth Cain
The Resurrection	Miss Enright and Mrs. John Kerwin
Jesus giving Holy Communion	Miss Kate Kent & Mr. H.E.St.George
Jesus Praying in the Garden	Mrs.George (Catherine)Knapman

In memory of her parents, John and Mary Hayes.

Our Saviour

Mr. H.E. St. George

Listed in the Dundas Star for January 4, 1917 were:

The Crowning of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Donated by Mrs. Minnie Murray

In memory of her parents, John and Bridget Enright

St. Joseph.

Mrs. Charles Quesnell

St. Michael the Archangel

Michael Lynch and Family

The Good Shepherd

The Ranger Family

The Priest Celebrating Holy Mass , in honour of

Very Rev. Dean O'Reilly

The Congregation of St. Augustine's

The Immaculate Conception, in honour of Right Rev.

Msgr. Heenan

The Sodality of the Blessed Virgin

Invitation of the King to the Marriage Feast

Young Men of the Congregation

St. Francis of Assisi

The Children

The (smaller) Windows in the Chapel (now the Sacristy):

St. Cecilia,

by Rev. J. Feeny, in memory of his sister, Maria L. Feeny

St. Joseph,

by Mary Enright, in honour of St. Joseph

The Sacred Heart,

by Elizabeth Layden, in memory of her husband, Michael

The Immaculate Heart of Mary

By M. J. Dunn, in memory of his beloved wife, Elizabeth Dunn.

The two windows , of the Annunciation and the Nativity, flanking the former altar, were not mentioned in either list. Because of their prominent position they were probably installed earlier. Both were donated by members of the Enright family. It is also possible that the window dedicated to Father O'Reilly was installed earlier. .

By the turn of the century several of the older families had become rather well off, economically. Perhaps the most prominent of these families, judging by the above lists, were the Enrights. "James and Brother" owned the large Livery Stable at 47 King Street West, in the centre of town. (The parking lot next to Booth's Furniture now occupies that site.) A printed ad read: "John Enright, Livery and Boarding Stables; First-Class cabs and carriages for weddings and funerals....Bus meets all trains. Baggage delivered to station and to all parts of the town." John Enright dwelt in an impressive late-Victorian mansion at 24 Victoria Street, and was, in 1902, the most generous contributor to the church. (Records

for 1902 listed 235 contributors, who donated totals of \$352.50 to the Christmas and \$320.50 to the Easter collections.)

The Baptistry (now the rear sacristy) contains a window of the Baptism of Jesus, donated by James Hayes, in memory of his parents, John and Bridget. The Baptistry also included a painting of “St. Boniface baptizing a pagan”, which is no longer there. A view of the four rear windows in the main body of the church, those of St. Michael, St. Francis, The Baptism of Jesus, and The Good Shepherd, is unfortunately interfered with by the slope of the choir loft.

The celebration in 1911 concerned “the reopening of St. Augustine’s”, with Bishop Dowling celebrating a Pontifical High Mass. The church had evidently been closed, or partially so, while the artist, H. E. St. George decorated (painted) the interior. In addition, electrical lighting was added, with lamps in the centre (hanging down?) and along the sides. The sanctuary was illuminated by reflected concealed lighting. The improvements described in 1917 included not only the windows, but also, again, decorating, and more significant, the addition of “hot water and steam heating”. There had been some form of heating since at least 1883, but January was certainly a fitting time to celebrate the addition of steam heating. The boiler was taken from an old lake steamboat! This heating system remained operative, despite a number of major problems, until 1996!

Interestingly, in all the discussions of the decorations no mention is made of the beautiful Stations of the Cross. which were painted by “Provenance” in Paris, France. (Since the painting is in the “classical” style and shows no signs of Impressionism, the paintings may have been done sometime before 1900.) As mentioned previously these could hardly be the Stations mentioned in 1886. There is therefor no indication of when the church acquired them. However, parishioners remember them as being in place before the Second World War. In the early years the first two and the last two Stations were placed on the front wall above the side altars to the Sacred Heart and to Mary. Along the nave there must have been only one Station , rather than the present two together, between each of the windows. The 1917 renovations etc. included a cost of almost \$3,900 for redecoration. It is possible that the acquisition and mounting of the Stations was included in that sum. .

The 1917 report in the Dundas Star also presented a financial summary of expenditures and contributions, with the well-earned boast by Father Feeny that whereas he had inherited a debt of \$3,100, the debt now remaining was only \$1,000.

Costs:		Contributions	
Decorating the church	\$3,899.93	Congregational subscriptions	\$3,494.00
Hot Water & Steam Heating	\$1,664.74	Window donations	.\$1,986.00
Stained Glass Windows	\$2,061.00	Receipts from other sources	\$4,245
Original Debt	\$3,100.00		
		Debt Remaining	\$1,000

The generosity of the congregation may be partially attributed to the extreme emotional stress of the time. This was during the darkest times of the First World War, and the mass slaughter of almost one million young men at Verdun and along the Somme River had just ended.

In the coming years much of the construction concerned the school. The older part of the present brick school was built in 1931 with the financial backing of the pastor, Msgr. Gehl, (the vicar general of the diocese), and Mr. James Grightmire, the school board chairman. In 1950 two rooms were added, and in 1952 four more. In 1958 St. Bernadette's School was opened. In 1960 and again in 1969 St. Augustine's School was enlarged to its present size.

From 1930 to 1949 the pastor of St. Augustine's was Rt. Rev. W. C. Gehl, a priest still well remembered by many of the older parishioners. Like Msgr. Heenan before him, Msgr. Gehl kept notebooks of the Sunday announcements, from which we can reconstruct some of the activities of the mid 1930s. Although still in existence, pew rents and indulgences received far less attention than they did in 1908. There were collections for the Holy Father (the former Peter's Pence), for the Propagation of the Faith, for the African and Indian Missions, and for special causes such as the Sisters of St. Joseph, and the House of Providence.

The Holy Name Society (for the men) was prominent, and took part in an annual parade to or from St. Mary's in Hamilton. The new CYO, and the Young People's Club enlisted the youth. The Catholic Women's League had appeared and was taking over the functions of the Altar Society. The Sodality still existed, but not as prominently as 30 years before. There was a Woman's Auxillary. Social evenings had been introduced. There were Communion Sundays, Devotions, and Missions, but novenas were rare.

There was an intriguing exchange of pastorships between November 1936 and April 1937. On Nov. 20 Msgr. Gehl was moved from St. Augustine's to St. Joseph's Church in Hamilton. The local

parishioners obviously expected this to be a permanent move, since there were farewell parties and gifts for the monsignor. To replace him two Resurrectionists, Fathers Wilfred Mayer and Norbert Dentinger, came from St. Joseph's to St. Augustine's. They too received farewells, from St. Joseph's. On the following Easter, to great surprise, Msgr. Gehl was moved back to St. Augustine's, and Fathers Mayer and Dentinger back to St. Joseph's. In explanation, Msgr. Gehl told the press reporter that he had completed "the survey made at the request of Bishop McNally; our work has been accomplished and we are leaving (St. Joseph's)" Much like a vice-principal in a school, a vicar general is at times called upon to do the 'heavy work' in a troubled part of the diocese. In this case it seems that St. Joseph's had been beset by financial difficulties and that the bishop had (somewhat secretly) dispatched his vicar general there to examine and take care of the situation. Obviously Msgr. Gehl solved the problem in record time.

The Right Reverend W. C. Gehl, P.A.V.G. (or D.P.V.G.) was obviously a very important personage in the diocese. As "Assistant Priest", he and the Bishop opened the first diocesan Eucharistic Congress with a solemn Pontifical Mass on June 14, 1938. He was the "Officialis" of the Hamilton Diocesan Matrimonial Curia. And he was one of three senior clerics appointed to administer the Priests' Infirm Fund. It was probably because of his many responsibilities outside the parish, that his curate, Father Warren took care of most of the baptisms and marriages.

The Second World War had its impact on parish life, although not as drastically as had the First. This impact is obvious in the parish records, particularly in the number of weddings. There was the unusually high number of 16 in 1940, with twelve of those in the second half of the year. However, there were none between New Year's and June 28 the following year. The annual number decreased steadily until there were only four marriages celebrated in all of 1944. But then there were eight in the first half of 1945, the time of the ending of the war in Europe.

Early in 1945 the complete listing of contributors to the church was printed; obviously there was no fear of inducing pride for the highest or embarrassment for the lowest figures. There were 385 names, including one "anon". A total of \$4,603.71 was received through the weekly envelopes (there was no mention of loose coins). Christmas yielded \$851.00, and Easter \$564.75, plus an impressive \$11,099.96 was given to the redecorating fund.

Beginning in September 1944, Msgr. Gehl launched another redecoration of the church.. This one

was profound in its impact on the sanctuary and on the parishioners. The old altar piece, which had been in place at least since 1883, was removed. Many parishioners felt heartsick to see it taken away. A broad gold and red curtain hung from a horizontal baldacchino was installed in place of the old Gothic altar piece with its familiar spires and saints. The colour scheme was said to be “pre-Reformation” with an emphasis on white, red, and gold. A “carved screen with panels of old rose laced with gold” was placed directly behind the altar; this screen had four posts each “topped by a saluting angel”.

Msgr. Gehl also added a rood beam across the lower ends of the sanctuary arch. This rood was a horizontal beam stretching across the space, topped by a crucifixion scene, with Mary and St. John. On the face of the beam were the words seen by the Emperor Constantine, “In this sign thou shalt conquer”. The locations of the ends of the rood can still be determined, because the decorations inside the arch are missing at the bottoms of the two sides of the arch. Beneath the beam, to the right of the altar rail was a niche containing a statue of the Sacred Heart. This may have been added to replace the beautiful side altar to the Sacred Heart. A huge sanctuary lamp, “fully seven feet high, made of hammered silver and gold” was hung in front of the tabernacle. The hole from which it was hung can still be seen in the middle of the pendant above the centre of the sanctuary. This lamp, imported from Italy, was the gift of a “benefactor”.

The beautiful side altars, which had been along the front (west) wall of the transepts (roughly under the present statues of Mary and Joseph), were moved to the north and south ends, under the stained glass windows. Both side altars were probably severely cut back to fit the lower space available. Two new “hand carved solid oak confessionals” were added next to them, presumably replacing older confessionals.

Extensive changes were also made in the rear of the church. The pews had extended back partly under the balcony; these last pews were eliminated. The balcony (choir loft) had been reached by a “double staircase” up from the vestibule (narthex). The stairs must have been on either side of the vestibule, where the bulletin boards are now located. The two staircases were taken out, and were replaced by one new staircase (the present flight) at the northern end of the vestibule area. The removal of the old staircases created space for the insertion of a bathroom. The balcony had had a rear wall which hid the tower window from the church proper; this wall was removed. However, the organ was rebuilt and placed in the middle. According to a photograph of the time, the tall organ pipes extended up across the window space, thus obscuring the sight of this beautiful large window.

The “opening day”, following the completion of all the alterations, was scheduled for Sunday, March 11, 1945, but much of the work had not yet been finished by that date. As mentioned above, a list of the donors to the project was published. While several of the parishioners gave up to \$200, Mr. & Mrs. J. .L. Grightmire gave the astonishing sum of \$3,700. It is possible, therefore, that the Grightmires were the “benefactors” who donated the remarkable sanctuary lamp. (Mr. James Grightmire, known as “The Road King” owned most of the bus lines in the area, lived in the fine stone house at the corner of South and Lynden Streets, and served as chairman of the Separate School Board.) .

Perhaps these alterations were symbolic of the changes in the parish. The old Irish families no longer dominated the parish lists, as hundreds of post-war immigrants came to Dundas. The first tide of non-British-Irish immigrants had arrived just before the first World War, as Father Feeny struggled with names such as Peraziana and Sorci, and bought fruit from Picone. The movement became widespread after 1945. Alongside the Kennellys and O’Connors, the Paines and Reeds, now were the Morellis and Santis, the Habinskis and Remenyis, Van Gendts and Van Schyndels, La Chance and Du Charme, the Links and Burghardts -- and families from many countries of Europe, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. In a human way, the local church had become strikingly “catholic”.

The life of the pastor must have been difficult and stressful. At the age of 76, Msgr. Gehl, resigned his pastorate and his post as vicar general, because of ill health in April, 1949. His long-serving assistant, Father Gerald Warren, served as interem pastor, until the appointment of Fr. Felix. J. McHugh, who was noted for his special rapport with children. He himself drove out into the country to pick up children preparing for their First Communion. He was hospitalized early in 1955, with Rev. C. O. Day serving briefly as Administrator until the appointment of Rev. Francis Kehoe as pastor in mid 1955. Father McHugh kept his Sunday notes for two years 1953-55. Again we can note changes. The former Holy Name Society parades gave way to Bishop Ryan’s beloved Marian Day rallies at Civic Stadium in Hamilton. In fact, the Holy Name Society was fading, and was to die out in St. Augustine within another decade. The former Altar Society was now being absorbed into the Catholic Women’s League. Retreats and Communion Breakfasts continued. The Legion of Mary existed until 1982, when it also was absorbed into the Catholic Women’s League.

There were now Knights of Columbus and Catholic War Veterans in the announcements. The youngest members of the parish were served by the Guides, Scouts, Cubs, and Brownies. The young

adults were invited to be members of the Regis Club. Square dances were held in the old auditorium. Perhaps most notable was the new emphasis on sports, hockey in particular. There were midget, bantams, pee wees, and “younger than pee wees”: both “sub peewees” and “sub sub peewees”(they must have been fun to watch!). For the more mature there were baseball and bowling. Pew rent had gone, but now that little extra money was being raised from weekly (?) bingo, and its replacement, for a time, the President of the Month Club, initiated by Joseph Walker and Bernard Clancy. Travelling bridge and euchre made its appearance. For 15 years, 1957-72, a parishioner, Joseph Kennelly, produced the Christian Culture Society, a series of lectures by world leaders in Catholicism.

Msgr. Gehl's rood-beam did not last longer than a decade and a half; Msgr. Kehoe had it removed around 1960. In April 1960 Bishop Ryan gave permission for a parking lot to be set up on the church lot. In honour of the 100th anniversary of the construction of the church, in 1963, it was redecorated, repainted once again, and the altar piece changed. The red and gold curtain was replaced by a red curtain hanging down from a large five-sided baldocchino. And, to the chagrin of many of the parishioners, the large sanctuary lamp was removed.

THE SECOND CENTURY

It was eminently fitting that the 100th anniversary of the noble church should be celebrated in 1963 by Bishop Joseph F. Ryan, who had himself been baptized in this church. Msgr. Francis P. Kehoe, who as pastor, had prepared the church for the celebration, remained as head of the parish for thirteen more years, until 1976, and thus became the second longest serving pastor in the history of the church. It was during his pastorship, in 1970, that a parishioner, Mary Burghardt, with the help of a small ecumenical group, founded Hamilton Right-To-Life. In the early 1960s one of the curates, John Sherlock, served on the national scene as National Chaplain of the Newman Clubs at Canadian Universities.

The post-Vatican II changes began to affect the parish during Msgr. Kehoe's final years as pastor. A few brave souls, notably Mary Burghardt, stood up in front (an intimidating thing to do in those days), and tried to induce the congregation -- so accustomed to remaining silent -- to *sing* to the glory of God. In the interest of simplicity, only a few hymns were tried, generally “Praise to the Lord”. In these years Andre Van Schyndel, with a group of young friends began the Folk Choir, which has continued to lead the singing at the early Mass. Early in 1976 Msgr. Kehoe was succeeded by Father John J. Murphy.

Shortly after coming to St. Augustine's, Father Murphy and his assistant, Father Ed Sheridan, discussed the need for a Christmas creche suitable to the church. They approached a parish family of carpenters, the Van den Heuvels. Martin Van den Heuvel, who was suffering from cancer, was instrumental in planning and designing the crib. The wood was obtained from an old barn and chicken coop on the family farm of Anthony and Rose Morelli on Upper Sydenham Road. When Martin died at the age of 33, leaving his wife and three children, the work was carried on, as a memorial to him, by his father Karel and brother John. The hand-carved figures, (now of great value), were ordered from Italy by Father Murphy. The *Hamilton Spectator* printed a lovely picture of one of the children at the crib on Christmas that year. At first the crib scene was placed at the southern end of the transept, below the first station of the cross. When Father Synnott arrived he placed pews in the space in the transept and moved the creche to the right of the altar, its present location.

Father Murphy also recognized the need for social and meeting space, and for a thorough renovation of the rectory. With the assistance of a parish committee, led by Ray Kane, Father Murphy planned and had constructed the parish centre, which is now such a notable part of parish life. Previously most large functions such as bazaars, dances, or farewell parties had had to be held in the school gymnasium. Similarly, parish organizations had been hard pressed to find available meeting rooms. Currently the parish centre is so much in demand, it is hard to imagine the parish getting along without it for so long. In addition there was a large expansion of the rectory, and a renovation of the older parts, to allow for the creation of private offices for the priests and for the pastoral assistant (initially Sister Francis, now her sister, Sister Claudia). The new centre was officially opened by Bishop Reding on October 28, 1978, with the bishop's secretary, and curate at St. Augustine's, Father Edward Sheridan, as Master of Ceremonies.

An unexpected task of restoration was caused by a violent wind storm on April 30, 1984. The tower window, facing Sydenham Street, was blown out. A local contractor, Nino Bragagnolo, came quickly and placed a protective coating on the pieces. Fortunately (miraculously?) the leading had remained intact, although three sections of the glass were blown out. The work of restoration was begun promptly, and completed within four months. The work was done so expertly that one cannot now tell that the accident had ever occurred.

A major renovation in 1986 was the reconstruction of the pipe organ. Father Murphy directed the choir director, David Paines, to research the matter and determine how best the organ could be refurbished. On the basis of this excellent report, new pipes were installed and repairs made to a total cost of \$65,000. The organ console was moved to the side and the pipes were lowered to allow for a view of the recently restored tower window, from the inside of the church. The warm morning sun was now able to stream into the church, right up to the altar.

All of this was in preparation for the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the church in 1988. Yet another massive redecoration of the church interior was initiated by Father Murphy. The entire church was repainted and the baldacchino changed according to the designs of the architect, Frank Burcher. The most dramatic alterations occurred as a consequence of the Second Vatican Council. A new simple altar was constructed towards the front of the sanctuary, to allow the priest to say Mass facing the congregation.

The two side altars, which were used during those years before Vatican II when the parish had three priests, and concelebration was almost unknown, were removed. (These altars had been accompanied by banks of vigil lights.) Parts of these altars were used in the construction of the new Altar of Sacrifice (the main altar) and the Altar of the Blessed Sacrament (the tabernacle). The small cross from the Sacred Heart altar now serves as the crucifix in the sacristy. The altar rail and several rows of pews were removed as well to make room for the new altar. The backdrop above the old main altar became a narrow blue curtain, topped by a circular, pointed tent-like baldacchino. The great crucifix from the former main altar, which had been donated by Leonard Strohmeier Sr., was hung up against the blue velvet backdrop.

The shaft-base of the magnificent pulpit was removed and made into a new baptismal font. The hand-carved pulpit included representations of the four evangelists, and, in the centre, a bishop. A previous pastor had referred to this bishop as St. Patrick, but since a number of books are at the foot of the saint, it probably represents St. Augustine. With these alterations completed, the 125th anniversary of the church building was celebrated by Bishop Tonnos in December 1988.

The year 1988 also marked the arrival of Father Ronald Synnott, another one of the notable builders, as pastor. To complete the parish centre Father Ron, as he referred to himself, had a basement meeting room constructed, with an elevator to it for the handicapped, and with the second outside entrance

required by law. Storage space was added too. A small courtyard within the rectory was closed off as well. A Hospitality Patio was laid out between the centre and the church, and the lawns were landscaped, with the addition of an irrigation sprinkler system.

Some major work was done inside the church. Leaks had developed in the ceiling above the sanctuary. This problem was solved by the redoing of the entire roof, plus the roofs of the rectory and centre, with aluminum “shingles”, guaranteed for 50 years. (This was the first major use of aluminum for this purpose in the area.). New lighting was added, the sound system improved, and special facilities added for the hearing impaired. The statues of Mary, Joseph, and the Infant of Prague were moved back to the front of the church. The fine old confessionals were reworked to allow for the more personalized forms of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and, sometime later, were moved across to the western sides of the transept arms, to make them more visible to the penitents..

The biggest project was undoubtedly the replacement of the entire heating and air-conditioning system. This major job required the workmen to operate within the crawl space under the church floor, and extract asbestos-covered pipes, before inserting the new pipes. The new system decreased the humidity in the summer, thus preventing the further deterioration of the lovely Stations of the Cross. The Stations were professionally cleaned and repaired (virtually reconstructed) over the span of a year, 1993-1994.

And out on Governor’s Road, a new, modern, much larger St. Bernadette’s School was constructed to meet the needs of the many families in that rapidly-expanding part of the town. It is hard to believe that only a decade or two earlier, there had been plans to close down that school and sell the valuable property. Recognizing the certainty of a rapid increase in population in the southwestern part of the town, Father Murphy formed a committee of parents, led by Herb Herauf, and Dr. John Sutton, to prepare a brief to convince the School Board to reverse its decision to close the school. St. Bernadette’s now has more students than does St. Augustine’s. As Father Ron once mentioned, when he came, the parish included 1200 families; when he left the number was up to 1600.

. These physical alterations under the pastorships of Fathers Kehoe, Murphy, and Synnott, were accompanied by profound spiritual changes as well. The laity was now expected to take a more active part in the running of the parish, and in the performance of the services. The shift from Latin to English

introduced the congregation to responses and parts of the Mass they had been only slightly familiar with previously. Lectors did the readings; cantors led the singing, in 1976 lay persons became Eucharistic Ministers to help distribute Holy Communion. An elected Parish Council began meeting in 1989; in time it and the Finance Committee became highly influential in the affairs of the parish. Women, who had for centuries been banned from the sanctuary, became prominent as lectors, cantors, Eucharistic Ministers, and altar servers. The laity, especially Delphine Fergusson, took a prominent part in welcoming a 10-member Laotian refugee family, sponsored by the parish. The Geagans welcomed and gave a temporary home to refugees from Central America. The Knights of Columbus constructed or renovated over 100 units of housing for the poor, and one of the Knights, Ron MacDonald, directed the Dundas town construction of a complex of not-for-profit/ geared to income housing.

New forms of parish life developed as a result of the ferment following The Second Vatican Council. The R.C.I.A. (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) was introduced by Father Murphy, in 1980, under the direction of Sister Francis Rossignoli, who had been the principal of St. Augustine's School for many years. The RCIA became probably the principal means of bringing new members into the Church. The Renew program, 1981-81, which consisted of small groups meeting in private homes, gave parishioners the opportunity to study and discuss sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church. The charismatic Light of Christ Prayer Group was initiated by Father Murphy on Ash Wednesday, March 3, 1983. At first it too was led by Sister Francis, but later Michael and Kathleen Van Gendt (who were also the organizers of Renew) became the leaders.

The 1917 list of windows had mentioned the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the "young men of the congregation". The latter had probably been members of The Holy Name Society, which faded into oblivion in the 1960s. In an interview printed in The Spectator in 1979 Father Murphy mentioned COR (Christians on Retreat) and ENCOR, the Catholic Women's League - "with 220 members", the St. Vincent de Paul Society, The Legion of Mary, the Choir (actually two choirs), and a basketball league. There were many more organizations then, such as Development and Peace (led by Phyllis Lomas), and ties to groups beyond the parish, such as Right-to-Life, and Birthright; and there continue to be many more now. An active Bereavement Committee, was founded by Cheryl McQueen in 1988. The Finance Committee, the Parish Council, the R.C.I.A., the Prayer Group, the Hospitality Group and the Prayer Network (off-shoots of Renew), the Scouts and Guides, the choirs, all help the parish community function in their various ways. The church is usually full for the Sunday Masses, and some

30-40 persons come regularly to the weekday morning Masses (generally over 60 during Lent and on First Fridays). Of course, the children’s Masses on Christmas Eve are jammed well beyond the planned capacity of the church.

A chronic ailment from which Father Ron Synnott had been suffering for years, necessitated his retirement from his duties as pastor in 1995. His able assistant, Father Joseph Durkacz took over as “administrator”, that is as acting pastor, until the appointment of Father James Curtin as pastor in 1996. It is now (1998) recognized that more repair work needs to be done on the church, notably on the windows and on the brick work. During the pastorship of Fathers Synnott and Durkacz an archivist was appointed, and he began the difficult task of transcribing the data in the old books of records, dating back to 1827, into legible notebooks. Under Father Curtin’s direction these transcribed names and events are being typed into a computer, to make the records readily available to all. The books before World War II have been microfilmed.

The latest communique from the Parish Council mentions “more than 50 groups”. Certainly the Parish Centre seems to have all its rooms occupied during most evenings of the week; and often hosts wedding receptions or parties on weekends. One wonders how we ever got along without it. All this vitality indicates a united effort to form a true community directed towards its ultimate aims of intensifying our ties to God, through Our Lord, and creating a fruitful leaven in society.

When I look at this church I marvel that a small congregation, most of them poor labourers, could have erected such a fine, large example of Gothic Revival. Granted the costs were kept down by not having a basement. Further, old-timers mention that there was a large debt. But still, how did they pay for it? and have it erected in less than a year? It is obvious that they built well. Probably the most famous parishioner was the late Bishop Ryan who was baptized as Joseph Francis Albinus Ryan in St. Augustine’s on March 1, 1897. Also, John Sherlock, the future Bishop of London, served as a curate of St. Augustine’s in the early 1960's.

The following chart lists the pastors of St. Augustine’s from 1927 to the present.

PASTORS			

Rev. James Campion	1827-29	Rt. Rev. E. Laussie	1908-09
Rev. John Cullen	1829-32	Rev. J.J. Feeney	1909-21
Rev. John Cassidy	1832-38	Rt. Rev. J.P. Kelly	1921-30
Rev. John Fox	1839-40	Rt. Rev. William C. Gehl	1930-49
Rev. M.R. Mills	1840-42	Rt. Rev. F.J. McHugh	1949-55
Rev. James O’Flynn	1842-45	Rt. Rev. Francis P. Kehoe	1955-76
Rev. Patrick O’Dwyer	1846-47	Rev. John J. Murphy	1976-88
V. Rev. John O’Reilly	1847-84	Rev. Ronald J. Synnott	1988-96
Rev. John Keough	1885-89	Rev. James A. Curtin	1996-
Rt. Rev. Edward Heenan	1889-1908		

There were in addition many assistant priests, curates, most of whose names have been mentioned for the early years. In more recent years, many priests came for short stays, or simply to help out in crowded times. Others served almost as co-pastors, helping their ailing or overly busy pastors. Perhaps most prominent among these were Father Gerald Warren , who performed most of the baptisms and marriages during the time of Msgr. Gehl, and Father J. Durkacz, who led the parish during the time of Father Synnott’s illness.

As the Catholic population increased, it became normal for the parish to have two assistants, that is three priests. This seemed to be the rule in the time of Fathers McHugh and Kehoe. Father McHugh even had three assistants, Fathers J. B. Cox, J. J. Gillen, and W. J. Holleran at the same time. As “old hands” Fathers McHugh and Kehoe were evidently considered to be the ideal persons to train young priests in their new duties. From what one has heard, some of the newly ordained found this “apprenticeship” difficult to bear. Close friendships developed among some of the curates: Fathers L. P. Cullaton and A. J. Kramer, Lawrence (“Lorne”) Howcroft and John Sherlock, Ray Modeski and Ed Sheridan, and Angus Smith with Ted Slaman and Harvey Roach.

As the supply of priests dwindled, the number of assistants decreased, and help was sought briefly overseas. Father Joseph Sach (pronounced “Shaw”) from Czechoslovakia, served under Msgr. Kehoe, before becoming officially the pastor for the small Czech community; Father Joseph Weligala from Poland

served under Father Synnott, as did another Polish priest, Father L. Szczygiel for a few months. The most recent development was the use of seminarians (to introduce them to the practicalities of parish life), especially after they had become Deacons. Well remembered in the parish were Jim McSharry, originally from England, and Martin Bradbury who is now working with the Native Peoples in northern Manitoba.

The above names include only some of the priests most prominent in our memories. There were of course many more, such as Revs. P. Maddigan in the 1890's; J. Crofton and Alban Leyes in the first decade of the 20th century; and D. Curtis, T. Clancy, and J. McBride in the 1920's, plus the many who seem to have stayed only a few months. All of them added greatly to the life of the parish, and, being for the most part young, performed a special function among the younger parishioners of St. Augustine's. Further, almost every young priest had some other diocesan duty to perform, such as teaching in the high school, serving on the school board, visiting the sick in the hospitals or the prisoners in the jail, assisting the bishop, or helping out in the myriad other tasks which needed to be done.

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