

ST. HELEN'S — WALLACETOWN

In 1827, Colonel Talbot petitioned Rt. Rev. Alex McDonnell, Bishop of Kingston, to come and visit him because he had with him people of the Catholic faith. Bishop McDonnell accepted the invitation and was received by the Colonel, who permitted him to say Mass in his own log dwelling for the benefit of Catholics.

In 1869, Mr. Michael Hooley donated a portion of land on his farm for a church. On January 26, 1869, an indenture was drawn up and registered on February 5, 1869, between Michael Hooley and wife and Rt. Rev. John Walsh, Bishop of our Diocese, for one acre of land on Lot 17, Con. 9, Dunwich North East corner, for the purpose of erecting a Catholic Church.

It was named St. ^u(Col~~u~~mkill's) after the Patron Saint of Scotland who, with 12 other Missionary Assistants travelled from Ireland and landed at Iona Island, Scotland and Christianized that country. He landed on May 12, 563, and died in 597.

For many years priests from St. Thomas had visited Dunwich Township and said Mass in the home of Michael Hooley and others. The church was a frame building 24' by 30'. The contractor was a Mr. McFarlane and the cost was about \$500. It is said that the privilege of occupying a certain pew was reserved by Mr. Hooley for his family. Fr. C. Zucker came from St. Thomas on horseback to celebrate Mass.

In 1884, Fr. Donald McCrae, Curate at St. Thomas, built a vestry to the Dunwich church. On July 28, 1884, Bishop Walsh of London, blessed the church and officially named it St. ^u(Col~~u~~mkill's). The first trustees were Thomas Hatton, John Tracey and John Lynch Sr. This church served the growing community for some years.

The first baptism in Dunwich was on June 19, 1859 by Fr. Trachom, a French priest. The child was John Crowley, son of Timothy Crowley and Catherine Regan, his wife.

In 1902, the Dunwich people agreed to build a new church in Wallacetown. Fr. Patrick Quinlan purchased a piece of property for \$125 in the village on No. 3 Highway. The contract for a 150 seating capacity was let to Mr. John Doyle and the church was erected, furnished and opened in 1902 at a cost of \$4,096.46.

The church was dedicated by Rt. Rev. Bishop Fergus P. McEvay. Friends and well wishers came by chartered train from St. Thomas to Dutton and were met by local conveyances, taken to church, fed, entertained and returned to the trains in the evening. The speaker was Rev. Fr. MacManiman. The seating capacity of 150 was inadequate for the occasion. Within the cornerstone were placed copies of the Catholic Record, St. Thomas Times-Journal, Dutton Advance and other papers.



Father Quinlan. 1892-1906.

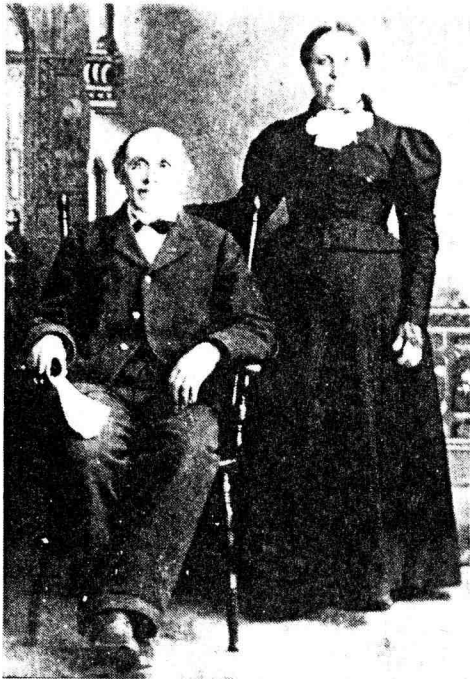
Priest of the Parish of the
Parish of West Elgin Lot 17 Con 9th.

Church
x



Collumkill E

The first church at Wallacetown was St. (Collumkill E) After St. Helen's was built the old church building was moved across the road and appears in the right background.



Timothy and Catherine Crowley donated the land for St. Helen's Church.



Thomas Hatton was a trustee of St. Cellumkill E

After the dedication, the first baptism in St. Helen's on April 19, 1903, was that of James Frederick Lynch, son of James Lynch and Catherine Garrett. The first marriage was that of Terrence Lynch and Mary McCaffrey on June 28, 1904.

As for the old frame church on the 9th Concession of Dunwich, it was sold to Michael Delaney who used it as an implement shed.

In 1918, Fr. Augustine Fuerth bought timber from a farm of Mike McCaffrey, north of Dutton. It was hewed by parishioners and John Cairns managed the building of the sheds. They were sold in 1953 for \$240 and \$60 of this was used to gravel the lane and parking lot area at the back of the church. Part of the sheds now are on Ken Watterworth's farm south of West Lorne on Highway 76.

The early pioneers of this church bore such Irish names as: Boland, Breen, Cavanagh, Crehan, Crimean, Coveny, Crowley, Delaney, Dooley, Doyle, Dromgole, Englehart, Fitzgerald, Garrett, Hannagan, Hatton, Hooley, Cairns, Mahoney, Lynch, McCaffery, McDonnell, McGuire, O'Day, O'Neil, O'Rourke, Power, Sheridan, Sullivan and Tracey.

Fr. Jim DeJonge said his first Mass in Canada at St. Helen's on October 27, 1950.

In the 1950's a wave of new immigrants from Holland came into the parish. They have proven to be good parishioners.

In 1960 the basement of the church was completely renovated.

In May, 1961, Mrs. Clara Casey, a faithful sacristan of the church, was recognized by Bishop Cody with the "Woman of the Year" award. Mrs. Casey also donated a piece of property in Wallacetown for a school site. Later the Diocese sold this property as it was not feasible to open a separate school there.

In 1962, the upper church was completely gutted and renovated with new plaster, woodwork and flooring. The Altar was remodelled.

On June 30, 1962, Donald Lyons and Rose Cairns were the first couple married in the newly renovated church.

In April, 1964, water was installed in the basement.

On November 8, 1964, the first Mass was offered facing the people.

The first English (vernacular) High Mass was offered on February 14, 1965. The Mass was taped and was witness to the ability of the choir and the lay participation.



Mrs. Clara Casey was named Mother of the Year in 1960 by the CWL and is pictured here with Father McMaster and Bishop Cody.

St. Colomkille Church

Prior to 1850 mass was said by a visiting preist in the homes of various parishoners, mainly that of Mr. and Mrs. Micheal Hooley on January 26, 1869 and indenture drawn up and registered on February 5, 1869 between Micheal Hooley and wife and the Rt. Rev D. John Walsh (Lord Bishop of Sandwich) for 1 acre of land on Lot 17 Con. 9 of Dunwich Twsp. (North East corner) for the purpose of erecting a Catholic Church.

Rev D. John Walsh was bishop of our diocese at this time. Rev. Fr. McRay was pastor of St. Thomas at the time.

This church was named St. Colomkille (modern time spelling St. Columkil) after the patron saint of Scotland who with 12 other missionary assistants travelled from Ireland and landed at "Iona" island, Scotland and christianized that country. He landed May 12, 563 and died 597.

The first church was a frame structure, the first trustees being:

Thomas Hatton

John Tracey

John Lynch Sr.

The first priests serving this mission church were from St. Thomas or Ridgetown.

Catholic Churches of West Elgin



St. Helen's 1902 Wallacetown



St. Henry's 1872 Middle St. Aldborough

St. Mary's 1972 West Lorne



More than a century of Christian service



The first choir at St. Helen's was composed of Will Crehan, Father Hussey, Gert Dromgole, Hugh McDonnell and Will McGuire in the front row, and Alice Crehan, Frazier MacDonell, Millie Hannigan, Miss Phelan and Kate McGuire in the back row.



First couple married in St. Helen's Church was Terry Lynch and Mary Frances McCaffery.



Sister Barbara Cairns.

Leo Donkers and Joanne VanDenBosch were the first couple married according to the new liturgy of Vatican Council II on March 6, 1965.

Present members of St. Helen's who were at the dedication of the church in 1902 are: Owen Hooley, Marguerite and Tony Englehart. There were others but they have moved elsewhere.

Three members of religious orders came from Wallacetown — St. Helen's: Miss Mary Cairns, Sister Barbara of the St. Joseph's Order was associated with hospital work. Miss Pauline McGuire, Sister Pauline also of St. Joseph's Order became a teacher. Miss Nellie Hooley, Sister Raphael, joined the Precious Blood Order.

As of August 1978, St. Helen's has had an outside paint job, new eaves and new sidewalks. Plans were also formulated for a re-decoration of the interior.

Through the generosity of St. Helen's C.W.L., the interior re-decorations were completed by Christmas 1978 at a cost of \$1,350.



St. Helen's young people with Father Fuerth in 1921.