

17

July 3, 2002 Wallacetown Women's Institute History  
over the past 90 years written by Louie  
Lockey.

The Wallacetown Women's Institute. What is it, and who are they?

In the year 1912, Wallacetown and district had a group of women interested in rural and cultural activities. The men had their own organization, "The Farmers' Union", which did not include women, who took a wide interest in farm activities, but were not included. Thus, the "Women's Institute" was started in Wallacetown.

One of the objectives, was to help women acquire sound and approved homemaking skills.

The Wallacetown Women's Institute was organized July 3, 1912 by Mrs N. J. Hunter from the Department of Agriculture. The meetings were held the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month and still remains on the same day to this time.

The 1<sup>st</sup> president was Mrs D. W. Graham and secretary/treasurer was Maude Robb.

The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting was held in the Town Hall on Sept. 6<sup>th</sup>, 1912 and it was decided to hold the meetings in the hall during the summer and in the members homes in the winter.

There were 36 members the 1<sup>st</sup> year.

Miss Minnie Gow gave an excellent paper on "LABOUR SAVING DEVICES IN THE HOME" - she was the 1<sup>st</sup> speaker.

In the early years a prize was offered at Wallacetown Fair - "FOR THE BEST WORKING MAN'S LUNCHEON" - the price not to exceed 15/- and to be sold afterwards.

It wasn't until 1927 that the "Institute Ode" was used in starting the meeting and in 1949



LOCAL.

CHURCHES.

CELEBRATING

ANNIVERSARY.



# Tyrconnell church marks 175 years

FOR THE TIMES-JOURNAL

St. Peter's Church, Tyrconnell is celebrating 175 years on Sunday. St. Peter's has the distinction of having held regular services since it was built.

St. Peter's Church had its beginnings with the first colonists who came to the Talbot Settlement. St. Peter's is the only church in this part of Ontario west of Niagara, except H.M. Chapel of the Mohawks on the Brantford reserve, in which divine services have been conducted continuously since it was built in 1827. In 1793 John Graves Simcoe, first lieutenant governor of Upper Canada, and a party which included Thomas Talbot, explored the country west of Niagara.

Apparently Talbot was impressed with what he saw and turned his back on military and court life and devoted the remainder of his life to the colonization of several counties in southern Ontario. On May 21, 1803, he took up his abode in what is now know as Port Talbot. With him came George Crane, the first settler to take up land in Elgin County.

In 1809, Leslie Patterson, his wife and two children; his widowed sister, Mary Storey, and her three children, and John Pearce, his wife and three children, left Pennsylvania in a flat bottomed boat and landed about five miles west of Port Talbot, where lay the land purchased the year before from Col. Talbot. Stephen Backus came the following year and married Anne Storey. These were Col. Talbot's first colonists and after untold hardships and toil, they lived to change the unbroken forest into beautiful farms.

The Pattersons were staunch Church of England people and John Pearce's mother was a sister of Bishop Seabury, the first Protestant Bishop in the United States. It is no wonder that these early settlers were anxious for a visit from the first travelling missionaries who would hold divine service where most convenient in

the district.

It was in 1820 that the Honourable and Rev. Dr. Charles James Stewart, who later became second Bishop of Quebec, first visited Dunwich and was one of the first missionaries or ministers of any church to hold service in this township of which there is any record.

Dr. Stewart kept records of all services on his travels. Thus we have records of persons baptized by him in Col. Talbot's house in 1820. Records of baptisms show that he spent a week in the district in 1822. In 1827, the first confirmation service in Elgin County was held in Col. Patterson's home before St. Peter's was built.

From the records it is presumed that the erection of the church had been started. In all probability the choice of site for the church was decided by Mrs. Storey's gift of 10 acres for church yard, burial ground, and rectory glebe lands. This land was part of the farm she had bought from Col. Talbot for two barley corns and was then the best part of her farm, which she and her son had toiled hard to clear and improve. The cemetery was used as early as 1825 and the land was deeded to the Bishop of Quebec.

St. Peter's was built in the autumn of 1827. There was no scarcity of timber in those days. Only the best of white or blue oak was used in the frame and used lavishly. One can almost step from crossbeam to crossbeam in the attic of the church. The outside of the church was finished in rough cast. The shingles and lath were made from pine and split by hand. Col. Patterson went by boat to Buffalo to purchase the glass for the windows, also the lead and oil for the paint and the putty. Tradition has said the first pulpit was a carpenter's work bench and the seats were planks on blocks of wood.

Only what is now the nave of the church was built at this time. Seven years later, Stephen Backus put on the present

siding, and John Pearce finished the inside by lathing and plastering the walls and ceiling, making seats, reading desk and pulpit. On the floor near the steps leading to the chancel may be seen square pegs which show

where the altar used to be situated.

Rev. James Stewart was the first resident minister of the parish and he commenced the parish register. In this register, in beautiful penmanship are the names of nearly 500

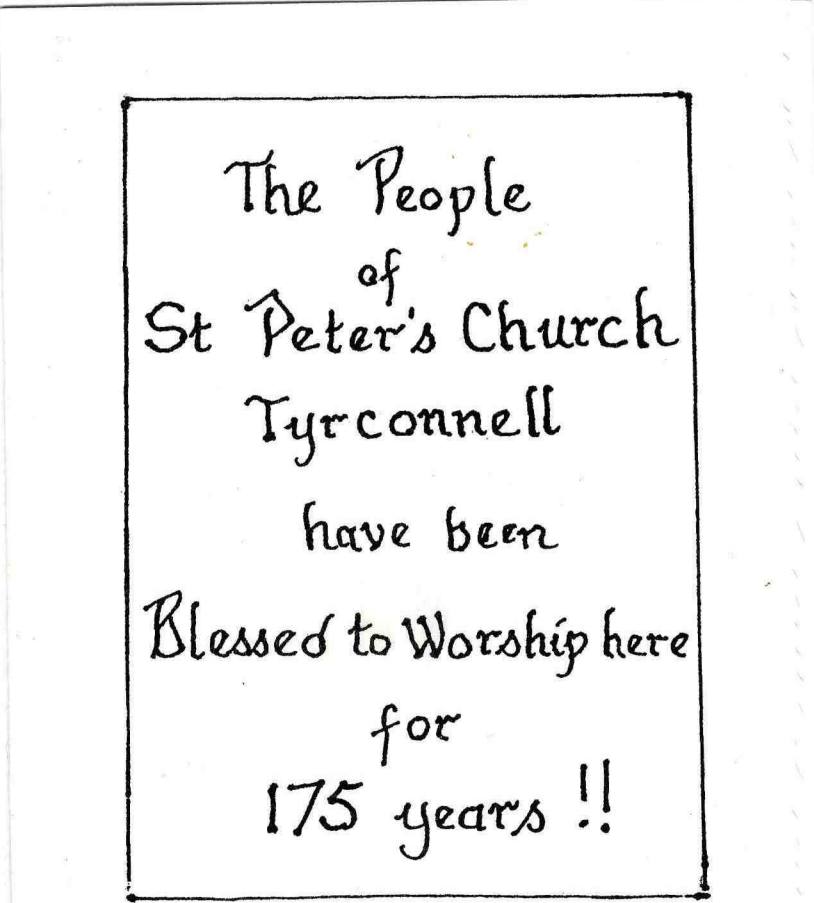
persons baptized by Rev. James Stewart between 1842 and 1849.

In 1843 a rectory was built.

In 1998 St. Peter's Church became the pivotal part of the action in a movie, That Old Feeling,

starring Bette Midler.

On June 30, Col. Talbot, alias Rev. Nick Wells, will again appear to help celebrate 175 years. The congregation welcomes everyone to this special service at 3 p.m. Come out and help us celebrate.





T.S. June 29<sup>th</sup> 2002



**CELEBRATING HISTORY:**

Rev. Anna Berwick, left, rector of St. Peter's Anglican Church, Tyrconnell, joins Tracy Gordon, a historical seamstress and Rev. Nick Wells, dressed as Col. Talbot, at the special service honouring 175 years of worship at St. Peter's, held June 30. *(Contributed photo)*



ST Peter's Church Tyrconnell.



*St. Helen's  
Roman Catholic Church  
Wallacetown  
August 11, 2002*



*100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

*1902 - 2002*



## COMMUNITY

# St. Helen's marking centennial

BY LORNA VAN BREE  
FOR THE TIMES-JOURNAL

WALLACETOWN — St. Helen's Roman Catholic Church is celebrating 100 years as an active parish in Wallacetown.

Everyone is looking forward to a Day of Reflection and Reminiscing at a special mass to take place on Sunday at 2 p.m.

Former priests, former parishioners as well as our own parish family have been invited to attend this special service. Our retiring bishop, Bishop John Sherlock, has kindly accepted our invitation to offer the sacrifice of the mass.

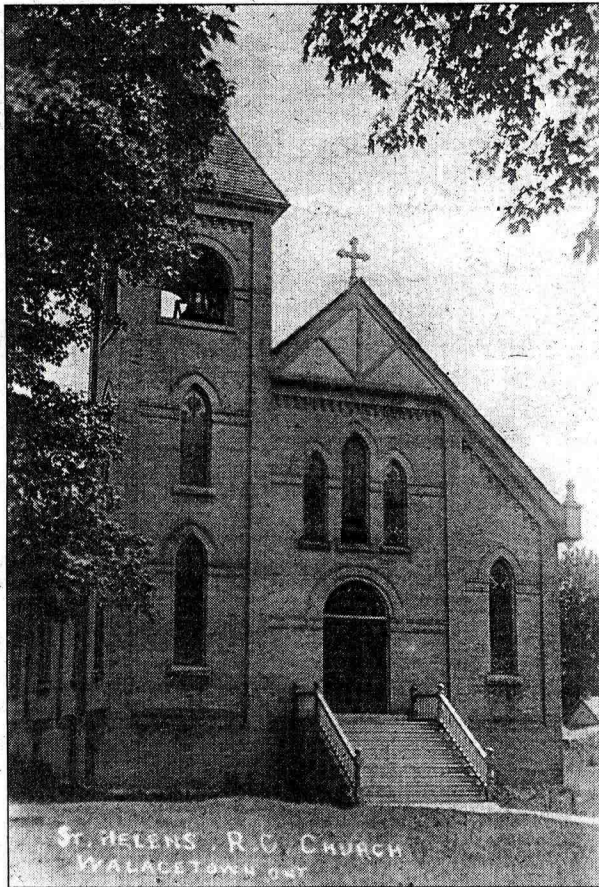
The catholic faith of the people in West Elgin began in 1827, when Col. Thomas Talbot petitioned Rt. Rev. Alec McDonnell, Bishop of Kingston, to come and visit with him, because he knew many people in this area who practiced the catholic faith. For a few years, mass was said in Col. Talbot's home. Later, the faithful went to St. Thomas or Ridgetown to attend mass, or on several occasions Michael Hooley offered his home to the visiting priest to offer up the mass.

In 1869, Michael Hooley donated an acre of land from his farm for the construction of the first Catholic church in this area.

A frame building, 24 feet by 30 feet at the cost of \$500 was built. For his donation of the land, Mr. Hooley and his family were given a special pew next to the Altar. The church was named, St. Colomkill's, after the Patron Saint of Scotland. Father C. Zucker came from St. Thomas on horseback to celebrate mass with the parishioners. At this time, men sat on one side of the church, while women sat on the other side.

St. Helen's Cemetery came into being a few years before the present day St. Helen's Church was ever erected.

In 1887, Timothy Crowley donated an acreage of land on the sixth Concession of Dunwich at Coyne Road for the purpose of having a cemetery for St. Helen's parishioners. The family also donated the boards and posts for the fence. The first body interred there was their own daughter, Maggie Crowley



in 1894.

During the time of Father McHugh's stay in our parish (1953), a large white oak cross was erected at the cemetery. It had been donated by Gabriel Gat, manager of West Lorne Erie Flooring. In 1954, the cross was erected using Mrs. Thomas Keogh completed a bristol board

book-form map defining the cemetery plans and burial locations. In 1995, Eddy Van Nuland drew a scaled map of the plots, then in 1996, a new aluminum sided cross was put up, with the Knights of Columbus donating the Crucifix. In 1986, Bill and Harry Merks erected the cornerstones at the gates with the fencing being

done by some of the parishioners.

In 1902, the people of this area decided to build a new church on Highway 3 at Wallacetown. It gave the faithful of this area an opportunity to attend mass by walking to it, as it was more centralized than St. Colomkill's. This structure was built of bricks, and all the parishioners who owned horses and buggies, hauled bricks from the brickyard that was located just west of Wallacetown. A cornerstone was added to the new church, called St. Helen's. Inside it, were placed copies of the Catholic Record, the St. Thomas Journal, Dutton Advance, and other important papers. The cost of the new structure was \$4,906 and two years later when Father Quinlin left, the church was mortgage free.

Sheds were built behind the church with lumber donated by Mike McCaffery. This was to give shade and shelter for the horses while the mass was being said. Because of his

donation of the wood, Mr. McCaffery was allowed a special place for his horses in the shed. Later, when cars were brought to the church, the shed was used by the highway to store salt for winter use.

Three members of St. Helen's Parish have entered the Religious Orders — Mary Cairns (Sister Barbara of St. Joseph's Order did various hospital activities), Kathryn Pauline McGuire (Sister Pauline, also of St. Joseph's Order, who became a teacher), and Nellie Hooley (Sister Mary Raphael, joined the Precious Blood Order).

Recently, many renovations have taken place at St. Helen's. In the basement, painting has been done with new appliances and new rugs added. Upstairs, the interior has been newly decorated, with

new rugs, new organ, statues have been refurbished, and new hymn books have been purchased.

St. Helen's Parish is a thriving community of faithful parishioners year round. Our members increase greatly during the summer months when campers from nearby campgrounds join with us in our Sunday celebration of the mass. Coffee and doughnuts are served every second Sunday of the month, where everyone can socialize and enjoy a spiritual time together.

After our special mass on Aug. 11, there will be a large display of history, in pictures, stories and a video presentation in the basement. Then outside, refreshments will be served. We hope to see you there.

## Steve Peters, M.P.P.

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Aug 2004.



At harvest time in the orchard in 1911, a family picks, sorts, grades and packs apples for shipment. Around the turn of the 20th century the introduction of modern spraying techniques allowed for far more undamaged fruit to reach market.