

NOTE TO READER: *The information contained in these texts is as accurate as possible. It has been compiled from various sources that are difficult to substantiate. We hope that the reader will forgive us. Check back periodically, more history to follow....*

CHAPTER 5 – FAITH, CHURCHES AND ST. JOSEPH’S CHAPEL

The beginnings of St. Joseph’s Chapel date back to 1944. However, by that time it had been some one-hundred-twenty years since the arrival of the first Irish Catholic settlers to our area and the subsequent colonization of the Seigneurie of Fossambault and the founding of St. Patrick’s Mission.

To attend religious services the members of the St. Patrick’s Mission had to travel several kilometers to nearby parishes that are now known as: Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures, St. Gabriel-de-Valcartier, and Saint-Amboise-de-la-Jeune-Lorette.



*A postcard showing the St. Augustin Church
Photo credit : Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BAnQ)*



The St. Ambroise Church 1795-1890
Photo credit: Société d'histoire de la Haute-Saint-Charles



The Saint-Gabriel-de-Valcartier Church
Photo credit: Denys Pelletier

Although many of the first Irish Catholic pioneers were resolutely firm and unwavering in their faith, many were also wary of the clergy because a significant number of Catholic Church leaders in Ireland had remained silent in the face of political repression by the British.

Nevertheless, the parish priest of St. Augustin would travel over bumpy roads through the mountain between Ste. Catherine and St. Augustin and across the Jacques-Cartier River to serve St. Patrick's Mission. He would hear confessions, provide instruction and baptize infants.

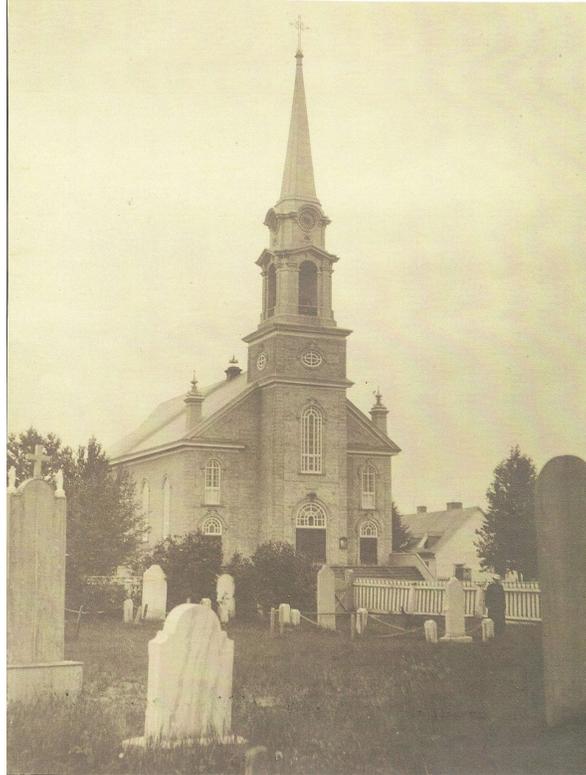
While the first church was being built, the first masses for the habitants of St. Patrick's Mission were celebrated by Father Hugh Paisley on the seigneurial grounds, in an outbuilding that served as a chapel.

The Parish of Ste. Catherine was founded on December 7, 1824 and the building planning process for the first church began in 1826. That church was consecrated on December 11, 1833. It was destroyed by fire in 1890 but the residents soon replaced it with a new Canadian style church.



Ste. Catherine's first church

Photo credit: "Collection et archives - Pôle culturel du monastère des Ursulines"



Ste. Catherine's second church

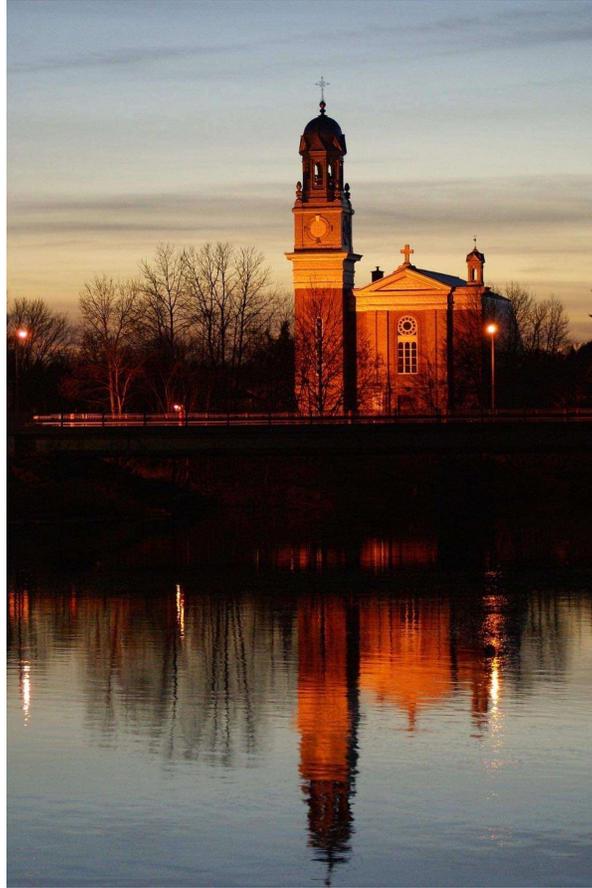
Photo credit: Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (BAAnQ)

The births, deaths and marriages of the residents of St. Patrick's Mission were recorded in Ste. Catherine beginning in 1824, the year the first registers of the parish were opened. Previously, these records were kept in Saint- Augustin Parish.

The first parish priest was Hugh Paisley and the first church wardens were:

- Nicolas Chapman
- Jeremiah Donovan
- Jacob Doyle
- Michael Fitzgerald
- John Meehan
- James White

On January 6th, 1910, the night of the Epiphany, the church burned. It was the tiny lit torches that caused the fire that burned it to the ground. The following year, under the dynamic leadership of Father Simon Jolicoeur, the present Ste-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier church was constructed on the ruins of the former church.



*The current church in Ste-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier
Photo credit: Société d'histoire de Sainte-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier*

When the 1833 church was built, a graveyard was situated on the banks of the Jacques-Cartier River. However, a flood in the early 1860's washed away part of that graveyard. The remaining graves were moved to a new site across the road from what is now the church parking lot. It is estimated that approximately two thousand parishioners are buried under and around the church.

In 1945, Ste. Catherine found itself in need of a second burial site and a lot on Laurier Street was acquired. The blessing of this cemetery took place on July 15, 1948 by Father Louis-René Dionne.

Parishioners in the more easterly parts of Ste. Catherine's Parish often found the distance to their church or to a church in a neighbouring parish was onerous to travel; especially if the weather and/or road conditions were challenging. To avoid such travel, a series of temporary 'churches' was improvised in a variety of buildings.

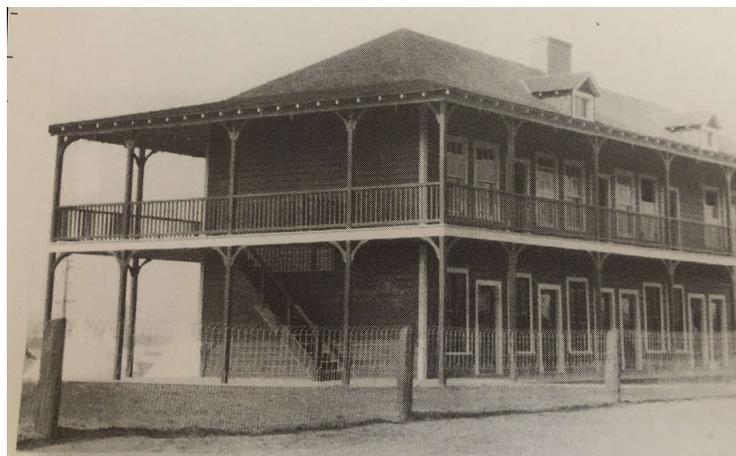
For example, during the First World War, the Irish Catholics of our area attended mass in an old building at the corner of Dublin and Gosford Roads. It was a Father Vachon who celebrated mass there.



*The King family children outside the building which served as a church during WWI
Photo from "Where Green is Worn"*

In the late 1920's and early 1930's, a priest from St. Gabriel-de-Valcartier celebrated mass every Sunday during the summer months in one of the old hospital buildings at Camp Valcartier. Later, masses took place in a building that was located close to where the current shopping center stands in the sector of Shannon known as Courcelette.

In 1932, on certain Mondays, the Curé of Ste. Catherine held masses in a two-story house located in the same area as the present St. Joseph's Chapel. This building had been the unofficial headquarters of Major-General Sam Hughes, Minister of Militia and National Defence during the First World War. Masses were celebrated on the ground floor, whereas confessions were held on the second floor.



*Headquarters of Major-General Sam Hughes –
Photo credit: "Valcartier d'hier à aujourd'hui (1914-2014)"*

Around 1940, mass began to be celebrated in the Powerhouse School, also situated in the area where the present chapel is located. The first attending celebrant was Father G. Robert. He was

followed in 1942 by Father Normand Marcotte who served until 1944 with Fathers Gagné and Servin.

In the spring of 1942, after a Sunday mass, Father Joseph-Damase Rouleau, Curé of Ste. Catherine presided over a meeting to discuss the possibility of building a chapel in the easternmost area of the parish. The chapel would accommodate the English-speaking parishioners of that part of the parish. He fully supported this idea and agreed to provide some financial assistance. After much discussion and a duly worded and signed petition, the construction decree presented to the Archbishop of Quebec was approved on June 10, 1944.

Many parishioners contributed to the church building fund by organizing social activities such as dances and bingos and residents who were gainfully employed also made donations. As a result of the pledges and the fundraising activities, \$3,854.00 was raised. Mr. Lucien Mainguy, a prominent architect and landowner in Shannon, graciously offered his services to draw up the plans for this chapel.



*Sketch of Saint Joseph's Chapel by architect Lucien Mainguy, July 31st, 1944
Copied from the back of an address to the Golden Age Club of Shannon called Shannon Historical
Paper No. 1 presented by Sister Marianna O'Gallagher on October 25th, 1973.*

Messrs. Martin Conway, William Lyons and Jack Neville were appointed trustees to serve on a Chapel Construction Committee with Mr. Jack Griffin as Secretary-Treasurer.

Concurrently, negotiations were proceeding with Mr. Henri Beique of the Quebec Power Company to obtain a parcel of land (150 feet x 225 feet) to erect the new chapel in close proximity to the Powerhouse School. The company agreed upon a 25-year lease at a yearly rent of one-dollar (\$1.00) payable on June 1st of each year. This lease expired in 1969, but was thereupon extended for an indefinite period.

Construction then began on the new chapel. Mr. H.P. Papillon was hired as carpenter and foreman along with a team of local workers, six of whom were Messrs.:

- Joe Bowles
- Dennis Driscoll Jr.
- Leo Floyd
- Allan King
- Billy Leahy
- Pete Powell

Many parishioners also donated their time in order to complete the building before the winter of 1944.

Canon Bruno Desrochers was the first attending priest and he offered midnight mass in the new chapel on Christmas Eve, 1944.

A horse stable, adjacent to the chapel, was built by Mr. Archie Tope and paid for by the stallholders to accommodate their horses. It was demolished a mere two years later by Mr. Johnny Kiley. He re-used the lumber to build a house on what is now Wexford Road, close to the corner of Gosford Road. A parking space was also provided for those who came to services by automobile.

Many ecclesiastical artifacts were donated to the chapel. The cross, the altar rail, the statues of St. Patrick and St. Joseph were all donated by members of the community. Mr. Paul Emile Jobin, owner of La Cie. Des Tuiles et de Marbre de Québec, and a resident of Shannon, donated the altar and had his employees install it. That altar is still in use today.

The first pews were purchased second-hand for \$60.00 from St Peter's Church in Limoilou. The current pews were fabricated in 1947 by Mr. A. Lebrun of Loretteville. The Stations of the Cross were installed during a mission preached by Father Dan O'Sullivan on October 26, 1947.



*Parishioners in front of the Chapel in its early days
Photo credit: Shannon Historical Society*

Heat was supplied by a wood stove from 1944 to 1946, and since 1946, oil, propane and electricity were all used at various times as a heat source.

In its early days, the chapel was known as “*St. Gabriel’s Mission Chapel*”. In August 1953, Monsignor Bruno Desrochers formally blessed the chapel and dedicated it to St. Joseph in recognition of Mr. Martin Conway, one of its founding fathers of the chapel. Considered by many as the one who initiated the project, Mr. Conway was particularly fond of St Joseph.



*Mgr Desrochers in front of St. Joseph’s Chapel
Photo from the collection of Betty Neville*



*Interior of St. Joseph's Chapel
Photo credit: Allison Kirkwood*



*Interior of St. Joseph's Chapel
Photo credit: Deborah Kiley*

Before the last Federal expropriation of land in 1965-66, Shannon's territory was much more extensive than it is today. In that expropriated land mass there were many homesteads, summer cottages and homes and the seasonal population fluctuated greatly. From the late 1940's, and for approximately two decades, three masses were offered every Sunday during the summer months. Some help came from the Franciscan Fathers who owned a summer camp at Mickey's Lake (now known as Lac du Père). They celebrated the third mass on Sundays. Their partially shaved heads, long brown robes and sandals were sure to be seen every Sunday during the

summer as they made their way on foot down the gravel Gosford Road towards the Chapel. The Franciscans contributed socially to the community and were noted for their many talents and their annual variety show. They also participated in various sports, such as softball and volleyball. Among the Franciscan Fathers who helped over the years were:

- Father Walter Bedard
- Father Brenden Cullen
- Father Constantin
- Father Sylvère Leblanc.

Over the years, the Chapel has been served by many attending priests, namely:

- Canon Bruno Desrochers 1944-1951
- Fathers Roland Doyon & Guy Godin 1951-1955
- Redemptorist Fathers from St. Patrick's Church, Quebec 1955 to 1978 when due to a shortage of priests, they could no longer provide services.
 - Father Charles McDonald
 - Father John F. Corkery
 - Father Howard
 - Father Behan
 - Father Robert O'Donnell
 - Father William Murphy
 - Father Cameron McDonald
 - Father Bill Stacey
- Father Georges Marceau 1978 – 1995 & 1996 - 2010
- Father Eugene Laplante, Pastor of St. Gabriel Parish in Valcartier served for a year from 1995-96.
- Monseigneur Jean Pelletier, a retired military chaplain carried on until December 31st, 2018.
- Father Ezechiel Rukimbira oversaw our spiritual needs until December 15th, 2019.
- Father Freddy Hessou is the Chapel's current priest.

The following Secretary-Treasurers have served the Chapel since its beginning:

- Mr. Jack Griffin from 1942-1966
- Mr. James Kelly from 1966-1991
- Mr. King Kiley from 1992-2009
- Mr. Rob Landrigan from 2009-2018, when he terminated the position of Treasurer, but continued to hold the title of Secretary.
- Mr. Lawrence Hamilton holds the position of Treasurer since 2018.

A Celtic Cross was erected next to the Chapel by the Shannon Historical Society, and an inauguration ceremony was held on July 5th, 1997. This Celtic cross symbolizes the pride, resilience and deep faith of the Irish people. On three of the base's sides "*Dedicated to the*

memory of all those who settled in this region in the early 1800s and to this day” is inscribed respectively in Gaelic, English and French.



The Celtic Cross

Photo credit: Allison Kirkwood

Each year, on Remembrance Day, a ceremony is held by the Shannon Historical Society in collaboration with the members of the Canadian Armed Forces of Valcartier. Commemorative wreaths are placed at the base of this cross to pay tribute to those Canadians in the military who lost their lives in a war.



Remembrance Day ceremony at the Celtic Cross

Photo credit: Betty Neville



St. Joseph's Chapel today
Photo credit: Allison Kirkwood