

ST. GEORGE

The year 1923 saw a flurry of Catholic activity in the Ottawa West area of what was then still a part of Nepean Township as Catholics witnessed the creation of St. George Parish and, at virtually the same time, the first step towards the establishment of a Catholic school in the parish.

The Ottawa Archdiocese established St. George Parish in 1923 to serve the large geographic area from Holland Avenue west to Britannia, and from the Ottawa River south to Manotick, an area previously served by St. Mary Parish farther east, which had been founded in 1891. This new St. George Parish had 160 families at the time. Monsignor George Prudhomme, pastor, celebrated the first Masses on September 30, 1923, at the convent of the Sisters of the Visitation, which was located on Richmond Road near the site of the proposed new St. George Church. The parish rented the convent's chapel until completion of the new church a year later. The architectural firm of Noffke, Morin and Sylvester designed the new church that cost \$63,000 to build. Its location near the Ottawa west station of the Britannia street car line meant convenient public transportation access to the Piccadilly Avenue site of the new church for Catholics along the line from Holland Avenue westward, as far as Britannia.

It can be seen how the founding Catholic families of St. George Parish closely linked church and school. While the first churchwardens were elected at a parish meeting on October 14, 1923, it was only a month later, on November 22, 1923, that the first meeting was held to establish a Catholic school in School Section No. 2 of the Township of Nepean (Police Village of Ottawa West). The convent of the Sisters of the Visitation on Richmond Road was the site of this meeting, just as it had been the site of the first Masses celebrated in the

CATHOLIC SCHOOL



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parish. At this November 1923 meeting, a group of Roman Catholic ratepayers decided to establish a Catholic school.

A temporary site, a stone building known as the Chamberlain property on Hilson Avenue, was selected. The new Catholic school operated from this site from January 1924 to June 1924. In June, plans were drawn up by the pastor, Father Prudhomme, and the Section School Board for a four-room school to operate in the basement hall of the new St. George Church. This was to be the location of the school from September 1924 to June 1939. During this time, the school and parish populations

grew. Eventually, an extension was built at the rear of the church, providing space for a new sacristy on the main floor and a basement area for the first kindergarten class.

Much of the success of the new Catholic school could be attributed to the hard work and dedication of the Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception who began teaching at the school in 1926. Initially they traveled by streetcar to the Ottawa west site from their residence in Sandy Hill. Eventually, in 1941, they established a permanent residence in St. George Parish. Indeed, except for a two-year span in 1932-33, every principal of St. George School from 1925 to 1976, a period of over half a century, was a Grey Sister of the Immaculate Conception.

From their beginnings in 1923, both St. George Parish and St. George School flourished, serving the Catholic families of the area. Students entered their basement school by way of the parking lot on the north side of the church. This parking lot also served as the schoolyard. In the late 1930s, when Father Michael O'Neil was the pastor of St. George Parish, the school moved out of the church basement and into a new building which had been constructed at 401 Piccadilly Avenue immediately north of the church, at a cost of \$45,000, the result of collaboration between the local school trustees and the Provincial Department of Education. This new school consisted of ten classrooms and two extra rooms as well as a fully-equipped shop and home economics rooms for Grade 9. School enrolment at that time was approximately 350 students but there was more growth coming, as reflected by an expansion of the school in 1943 and a further, major addition in 1949.

Residential growth in the whole area led to the establishment of Our Lady of Fatima Parish, farther west, as well as

continued growth for both St. George Parish and the school. During the 1950s, there were about 1,000 Catholic families in the parish, with St. George School enjoying an enrolment of 500 to 600 students. It was during this time that this Ottawa West area of Nepean was annexed by the City of Ottawa. As a result, the Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board assumed responsibility for St. George Catholic School.

In September 1970, St. George School became a kindergarten to grade 6 school, with the grades 7 and 8 students being sent to Holy Rosary Intermediate School on Melrose Avenue. In September 1973, there was another redeployment of the grades 7 and 8 students, this time to St. Joseph Junior High on Broadview Avenue. Ten years later, in September, grade 6 graduates from St. George School were enrolled in an intermediate school on Keyworth Avenue.

St. George School on Piccadilly Avenue saw its last major addition in 1986 when a gymnasium was added to the complex. The school continued at this location until it was closed by the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board in June 2002, with the agreement of the school community. St. George was relocated to the former intermediate school premises on Keyworth Avenue where it now operates as a junior kindergarten to grade 6 school. The intermediate student body formerly housed at this location moved to Notre Dame Catholic High School on Broadview Avenue, where a new addition and renovations had taken place to accommodate the influx.

At its present location, St. George School has two kindergarten rooms, six primary classrooms, eight junior classrooms, a resource classroom, a computer lab, library, music room, art room and gymnasium, with a student enrolment of over 300 students. It also has a school-age child care program.

One long tradition at St. George Catholic School at its Piccadilly Avenue location was a "May Day" procession from the school to Mary's grotto located on Piccadilly Avenue next to the former St. Michael's Convent. Today, the school continues with a variety of activities and events that maintain the school spirit and sense of community that has characterized it since first established in those opening years of the parish. School Masses, play days, Christmas pageants, concerts, fun fairs, sacramental celebrations, student awards, Thanksgiving food drives, hot dog and pizza days, school patrols, visiting drama groups and graduation ceremonies have all added to school life over the years.

There has always been a strong link between the parish and the school, strengthened no doubt by the close proximity of one to the other for so many years. Parent-teacher associations and, more recently, school councils have strengthened this link. St. George parishioners, in the past, willingly paid separate school taxes, even if they were higher, because they wanted their children to be educated in a Catholic school where Gospel values permeated the curriculum.

Present Principal

Michael Keeler (2004-present)

Past Principals

Margaret Roche (January-June 1924)

C. McIntosh (1924 interim)

Sister Mary Patrick (1925-26)

Sister Mary Regis (1926-31)

Sister St. Austin (1931-32)

Geneva Prud'homme (1932-33)

Sister Ignatius of Loyola (1933-50)

Sister Elizabeth of the Cross (1950-55)

Sister St. Helen (1955-58)

Sister Mary Aloysius (Sister Mary Stanton) (1958-65)

Sister Mary Josephine (1965-67)

Sister Anna Clare (1967-70)

Sister Catherine McCann (1970-73)

Sister Mary Stanton (1973-76)

John Burns (1976-84)

Donald Lenaghan (1984-89)

James Morrison (1989-93)

Alex Nagle (1994-95)

Yvonne Gliege (1995-97)

Georges Bouliane (1997-2004)

First Teaching and Support Staff (1924)

Gertrude Gleeson

Clara Pothier

Jas Hall, Custodian
(January-June 1924)

W. Gillis, Custodian
(September 1924)

Former Students

With over 80 years of history, St. George Catholic School has had many of its students go on to play roles of prominence in society.

Archbishop Brendan O'Brien of St. John's, Newfoundland. He grew up at St. George Church and was Assistant Pastor under Monsignor John MacDonald who served from 1967 to 1985. After serving as an auxiliary bishop of Ottawa, he was appointed Bishop of Pembroke in 1993. In 1997, he was named Chaplain for the Ontario Knights of Columbus.

Rev. Brian Swords, Superior General of the Scarborough Foreign Missions

Rev. Michael Gillissee, Rev. Glen Clarke, Rev. D'Arcy Coulson, Rev. James Noonan, O.M.I., Rev. Jack McCann, O.M.I., Monsignor Paul Baxter, Rev. Tom Farrell, Rev. Tom Cassidy, O.M.I., and Rev. John Massell, O.M.I.

Terry Marcotte, CJOH-TV sports announcer

Pat Marsden, a sports broadcaster who was sports director at CKOY radio in Ottawa before joining CTV as the play-by-play voice of the network's Canadian Football League coverage. He later became sports director at CFTO-TV in Toronto before finishing his career at The Fan 590 radio station in Toronto, retiring in 2004. He is a member of the Football Reporters of Canada Hall of Fame. In 1972, he was a studio host for telecasts of the Canada-Soviet Summit Hockey series.

Hon. Allan Rock, MP, Federal Cabinet Minister and Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations

Ottawa Citizen reporter Susan Riley

Sportswriter Eddie McCabe

Tim Higgins, National Hockey League player

Julie Maloney, 1970 Miss Canada

Tony Graham, Toyota automobile dealer

Jake Dunlap, General Manager of the Ottawa Rough Riders Football Club

Dr. Tom Anderson,
Ophthalmologist

Dr. Edward O'Brien, Cardiologist

Dr. Jim Casserly

Dr. Owen Kealey

Michael Neville, Attorney

Brian Mulvihill, Chartered Accountant

Colleen Swords, Director General, Legal Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs

School Principals Tom Duggan, Bernard Swords, Wayne Carroll and James McStravick

School Colours

From the 1990s to the present —

Navy bottom, red/white top with the St. George Catholic School logo

Logo

The St. George Catholic School logo, in the form of a shield, features a picture of a dragon reading a book, flanked by two crosses, with the name "St. George" at the top. The dragon refers to the traditional story about St. George.

Motto

The motto of St. George Catholic School is "School for All Children."

School Uniform

The first school uniform, worn from 1963 to 1967 and only by girls, was a green jumper with the St. George Catholic School logo and a white blouse. The second school uniform worn only in 1967 (one year only) was also exclusively for girls, and was a centennial plaid jumper and a white blouse.

Outstanding School Trustee

His Holiness Pope Pius XII named Francis M. Peters a "Knight of St. Gregory the Great" for outstanding service to St. George Catholic School, St. George Parish and the Nepean and Ottawa Separate School Boards. He was Chairperson of the Board of Trustees for Separate School Section No. 2 in Nepean Township for 17 consecutive years. Following the annexation of the area by the City of Ottawa in 1950, Mr. Peters became a Trustee of the Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board where he served as Chairperson of the Board and Chairperson of the Finance Committee, alternatively every two years until at least 1963.

Child Care Program

St. George Catholic School offers a school-age child care program.