

# *Our History*

In 1830, prior to the formation of St. Mary's Parish, the few Catholic families travelled to St. Agatha Church to attend Mass. Occasionally, they were blessed to have a missionary stop to say Mass at a home or neighbouring Mission Station.

The first missionary priest to visit these parts was Father John Wiriath. In the years from 1834 to 1837, he counted six Catholic families numbering sixteen souls.

In 1852, Berlin, with a population of 750, was chosen as the county seat. Since this apparently was to be the leading community of the district, the Jesuits chose to make the area a religious centre. Father Rupert Ebner, S.J., the spiritual leader from 1848 to 1856, encouraged the Catholics of Strassburg, Williamsburg, Bridgeport and Lexington to unite with those of Berlin to build a church. The group agreed.

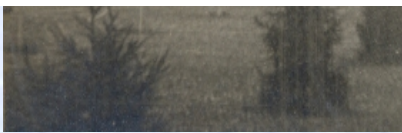
## *The First Church*



On August 16, 1854, land for the church on the southeast corner of Weber and Young Streets in downtown Berlin, was purchased for \$200.00 from David Weber. The purchase was finalized the same year Berlin was incorporated as a village, after qualifying with the required 1,000 residents, on January 1, 1854.

On September 17, 1854, the cornerstone was laid by Bishop DeCharbonnel of the Toronto Diocese. On this occasion Father Holzer, S.J., preached in both German and English. The church was completed in 1856 and blessed by Bishop Farrell, the first Bishop of Hamilton, and dedicated to Our Blessed Mother, under the title of St. Mary of the Seven Dolors.

The church, not including the sanctuary or tower, measured 80 by 40 feet. A small room was added on the west side, to serve as a Sacristy and provide sleeping quarters for the priest. While it was regarded as the finest Catholic Church west of Toronto, it did not have a heating system and on the coldest winter days, the priest sometimes had to thaw out the frozen



chalice before he could consume the Precious Blood. The floor, at that time, was temporary and unfinished and the boys used to sit on it and dangle their feet through the openings during Masses. Some years later a furnace was installed beneath the Sanctuary to provide heat for the church.

About once a month a priest would come from New Germany (Maryhill) to hold Mass in the church. In 1857, Father George Laufhuber, S.J. made his quasi-residence here, from which point he carried on his mission activities in the surrounding districts. Shortly after his arrival he began a canvass for subscriptions to build a rectory and a new sacristy. The drive was such a success that he was able to build both. The Sacristy was built first and served as his living quarters until the rectory was completed. With a permanent priest in residence, the Parish of St. Mary's was formally begun.

In 1859, Father Laufhuber left Berlin to pioneer in other districts. The parish was again served by the Fathers from St. Agatha and New Germany until March of 1860 when Father Edward Glowacki, C.R., took over as Pastor, and like his predecessor, served the surrounding mission stations. With the arrival of Father Glowacki, C.R., St. Mary's began its long stewardship under the Congregation of the Resurrection Fathers.

On January 6, 1861, Father Francis Breitkopf, C.R. became the new pastor of St. Mary's. Two years later he had a frame tower erected in front of the church in which two bells, St. Mary and St. Joseph, were soon placed. The town council paid for the ringing of the larger bell, St. Mary, at morning, noon and evening, until after many years, the town procured one of its own. There was also a clock with four dials placed in the tower. This clock was later taken to St. Clements.

In 1866, Father Louis Funcken, C.R., who had founded St. Jerome's College in St. Agatha in 1864, became the new Pastor. He then moved St. Jerome's College to Berlin. When Father Funcken became ill, he went to Holland to be with relatives, and died there in 1890. In his Will, he expressed the desire that his heart be returned to St. Mary's Church with the following inscription to be placed on its covering: "Here rests the heart of Father Louis Funcken, who loved God and man". His relatives however, would not allow this to be done, and it was not until some years later that Father William Kloepfer, C.R., returning from Rome, passed through Holland and procured Father Funcken's skull instead. The skull was placed in the church. With the building of the present church, a repository for



the relic was made and located near the Sanctuary. Over it was placed a marble bust of Father Funcken, in half-relief. His skull was later removed from the church and is now buried in the St. Agatha Cemetery. The stone face of the repository, inscribed in German, was discovered in November 2008 behind the Altar of the Sacred Heart, and moved to the museum of the present church.

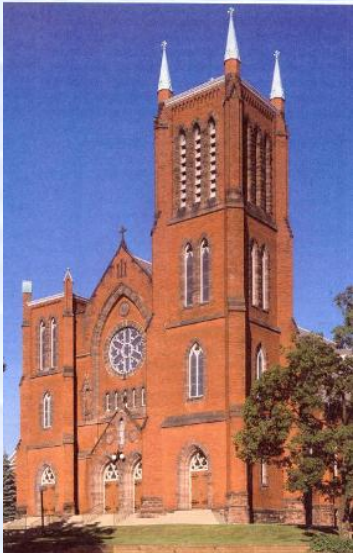
In 1871 the sanctuary was added to the church and adorned with beautiful stained glass windows from Holland. Two of these windows were later installed in the new church and a third one, the "Pieta" was stored away.

A large pipe organ, with a water motor, was installed in 1883 for a cost of \$1,750.00. This organ was later rebuilt and enlarged and placed in the new church

By 1891, 20 percent of the population of Berlin was Roman Catholic.

With the completion of the new church in 1903, the old church was used as a Parish Hall and gymnasium, until it was razed in 1927, to provide additional playground for the school children.

## **The Present Church**



On June 26, 1892, a meeting was held in the church to discuss a building fund for a new church. The parish population had so increased that the number of Sunday Masses had to be doubled, and still the church was crowded. It was decided that a monthly collection for the building of a new church would begin in July 1892.

By 1899, sufficient funds were raised to purchase property adjoining the church land from John Fennell for \$7,500.00. On Sunday, May 27, of the following year, the project was begun. After every Mass that day, all the parishioners went in a body to the building site and each one dug a shovel full of earth. Each of the school children had been equipped with a toy shovel tied with a red ribbon bow, so that they could share in the momentous experience of turning sod for the church. On September 30, 1900, Bishop T. J. Dowling laid the cornerstone, and Father John Kosinski, C.R., delivered the sermon. The silver trowel used by Bishop Dowling was later presented to Sheriff John Motz, the oldest member of the building committee, after whose death it was passed on to

Mr. George C. H. Lang. The six parishioners who signed the address to Bishop Dowling on this occasion had been present at the laying of the cornerstone of the first church in 1854.

In late autumn 1903 the church was completed. On December 13, His Excellency, the Most Reverend Donato Sbaretti, Papal Delegate at Ottawa, together with Prelates, priests and people from far and near, dedicated the new edifice under the same title as the first church.

The new church had been planned by A. W. Holmes of Toronto. Caspar Braun had the masonry contract and William Forwell was the carpentry contractor. The original plans of the church included three steeples, as can be seen on the original architect's drawing, hanging in the church museum. The spires, however, could not be added in time for the opening, and it was later decided to omit them entirely.

The church is Gothic in style, in the shape of a Latin Cross, having a large tower on the front right corner and a smaller one on the left. Four sets of double doors are at the front, with a large rose window over the two centre ones. The church is 186 feet long. The nave is 61 feet wide and the transept is 92 feet in width. At the front, the church is 100 feet wide. The seating accommodation, excluding the gallery, is for 1,000 persons.

The church was well furnished through substantial donations by parishioners, the Choir and the Church Societies. These gifts provided statues, stained glass windows, holy water fountains, candelabra, altar candle holders and other essentials. Outstanding among the personal gifts were the Fourteen Stations of the Cross, presented by the wife of Dr. Anthony Kaiser, nee Mary Lang a sister of George C. H. Lang. The main altar, started by Nicholas Durrer of Formosa, was completed after his death by his son, Walter. It was donated by the ladies of the parish. The organ which had been in the old church was rebuilt and enlarged and placed in the new church, together with a water motor, purchased some five years earlier, to pump the organ. Two bells were placed in the tower of the church. The smaller bell, named St. Joseph and the larger, named St. Mary, had been moved from the old church. The church was heated by a fan system, still reputed to be one of the finest to be found.

The total cost of the new church was approximately \$90,000.00.

Father Theobald Spetz, C.R., became pastor in 1911 and had the church decorated in 1912 by Signor Ilario



Panzironi, a Roman artist of New York, for \$6,000.00. The Gothic vault with its twelve large panels was nicely suited to hold life size group paintings. Since the church is dedicated to the Sorrowful Mother, portrayals of her Seven Sorrows dominate the ceiling. The remaining five panels received paintings of The Annunciation, The Nativity, The Coronation, The Resurrection and The Ascension. Other improvements such as wainscoting and new lighting fixtures came to \$4,000.00.

On August 4, 1948, the installation of a new Casavant Pipe organ was completed. It was dedicated on September 12, 1948, as a memorial to the men of the parish who gave their lives in World War II. A plaque placed behind the organ lists their names: Howard Beaudoin, Claude Berges, Allan Braniff, Stanley Connell, Walter Englert, Oscar Fischer, Carl Fuja, Robert Hickson, George Hoch, Jack Lippert, Kenneth McGrath, Arthur Mueller, John O'Neill, Leonard Schell, Wilbert Schumacher, Roy Schnarr, Fred Tucker, Edward Wilhelm and Alfred Yantz.

## **The Pastors of St. Mary Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows**

### **Parish Pastors**

2006 - Present	Fr. George Nowak, C.R.
2005 - 2006	Fr. William S. LaFlamme, C.R.
2003 - 2005	Fr. Christopher Buda, C.R.
1999 - 2003	Fr. Ernest Varosi, C.R.
1997 - 1999	Fr. Fred Bechely, C.R.
1995 - 1997	Fr. David Mowat, C.R.
1993 - 1995	Fr. Norman Choate, C.R.
1981 - 1993	Fr. Lorford Keasey, C.R.
1974 - 1981	Fr. David Doran, C.R.
1972 - 1974	Fr. Hubert Gehl, C.R.
1965 - 1972	Fr. Frank Dentinger, C.R.
1960 - 1965	Fr. Claude Straus, C.R.

### **Pastors of the German Congregation**

2002 - Present	Fr. Martin Jacek Mikulski, SAC
1995 - 2002	Fr. Gregory Roetker, SAC
1990 - 1995	Fr. Theodor Gerharz, SAC
1986 - 1990	Fr. Gottfried Seifert, SAC
1985 - 1986	Fr. Alois Mutert, SAC
1978 - 1985	Fr. Wilfrid Systemans, SAC
1972 - 1978	Fr. Wolfgang Weiss, SAC
1968 - 1972	Fr. Joseph Schmelz, SAC
1968 (2 mnths)	Fr. K. Trabolt, SAC
1965 - 1968	Fr. Willi Kroell, SAC

1951 - 1960	Fr. Anthony Mayer, C.R.
1944 - 1951	Fr. Robert S. Dehler, C.R.
1933 - 1944	Fr. Charles B. Meyer, C.R.
1928 - 1933	Fr. Menno S. Hinsperger, C.R.
1919 - 1928	Fr. Albert L. Zinger, C.R.
1915 - 1919	Fr. Anthony J. Fisher, C.R.
1910 - 1915	Fr. Theobald Spetz, C.R.
1890 - 1910	Fr. William Kloepfer, C.R.
1865 - 1890	Fr. Louis Funcken, C.R.
1861 - 1865	Fr. Francis Breitkopf, C.R.
1860 - 1861	Fr. Edward Glowacki, C.R.
1857 - 1860	Fr. George Laufhuber, S.J.