

Missionary work within the parish was given a helping hand in 1977 with the formation of the "Reaching Hands Mission Committee". Two of its first projects were the support of the Diocese of Moosonee and a program to send eyeglasses to Africa.

St. John's, the largest point in the parish with more than 110 families, underwent significant expansion in 1996. A side aisle was added, the narthex was extended, the tower was reinforced and a bathroom added. A \$100,000 mortgage for the expansion was paid off in just 18 months.

Roman Catholic

Before any Catholic churches were built in North Hastings, priests rode on horseback to celebrate mass in private homes and logging camps. Clergy made seasonal visits to the settlements of Umfraville, L'Amable, Bird's Creek and Town Line along the Hastings Road.

Bancroft's first chapel was erected on Sherbourne Street in 1893 as a mission of Maynooth Parish. Services were held on alternate Sundays in the two churches by the Maynooth priest. Not until June, 1934 was Bancroft given parish status with Rev. Leslie J. Kennedy as resident pastor at Our Lady of Mercy Roman Catholic Church. With the discovery of uranium, an influx of mining families resulted in a need for a larger church which opened in 1960. In 1959 the four-room school beside the church was opened and a residence was built for the Sisters of St. Joseph who arrived to staff the school. The residence was later demolished to allow room for a school addition.

In 1926 the parish women formed a group called the Mission Circle to do charitable work and raise money for the church. The Catholic Women's League was formed in 1955 and, with more than 50 members, is still active, as are the Knights of Columbus, a men's organization.

The first chapel, named for St. Ignatius the Martyr, was built at Doyle's Corners, known today as Maynooth. The resident priest, Father Meehan, had to serve the vast area from Combermere to Haliburton. A larger church, attached to the original chapel, was built in 1916. A new rectory was built. But in 1976 a fire, started by a lightning strike, demolished the imposing church. A new church was built, joined to the rectory which survived the fire. All that remains of the old church is the bell, in a tower mounted beside the new church, some of the cement blocks forming a border by the front entrance, and the steps to the old church site.

to the life and the economy of Canada. They have all repeatedly expressed their heartfelt gratitude for the opportunity of starting a new life in this great country. Several of them have made visits to Bancroft which they call their Canadian "hometown".

Father Maloney led a delegation

One of the most influential clerics in Bancroft's history was Father Henry J. Maloney, appointed to Our Lady of Mercy Parish on September 8, 1957. He was born in Eganville, the son of Dr. Martin J. Maloney and Margaret Bonfield. Following graduation from Eganville Catholic High School, he attended St. Patrick's College, Ottawa, and St. Michael's College (University of Toronto) where he obtained a B.A. degree in philosophy in 1937.

The discovery of uranium in the Bancroft area at the time of his appointment presented a challenge to Maloney. As the village's population grew rapidly, a building committee was formed and plans made for needed expansion – the construction of a larger church and rectory, a Catholic school and convent residence.

Construction of the school was well underway when the federal government announced that because of a world surplus of uranium, mining and processing operations would cease when all contracts were completed. This meant the Bancroft mines would close. This was disturbing news for the Village of Bancroft and for