

## "MAIDSTONE PARISH"

This parish so favorably situated in the suburbs of Windsor and on the Provincial Highway had its beginning by a few zealous Jesuits making their way by foot through the forests and blazed paths and saying Mass in the homes of some families whose descendants are yet here.

One of them, Patrick Tumbleton donated two acres of land at the corner just ~~east~~ of the present church and there Father Virgilius, S. J. erected the first log church and lived in another log house on the Middle Road and just past the Six Corners.

The first cemetery was in part of those two acres. He started the church records in 1845. He worked for his scattered congregation until 1847 when Father Jaffre succeeded him until 1855. Then this parish comprised Woodslee, Belle River, much of McGregor and as far south as Pelee Island. It was Father Jaffre who built the old brick church and a brick house for the priest. The church was small and had no pews but instead benches ten or twelve feet long cut with a whip saw and made of some of the finest timber to be found in Canada. At this time fine walnuts and oaks were very plentiful and were only cut down to be burned. The first old log church was moved over to the corner of the present church property and served as the first Post Office and Shoe Shop and was later used as a tavern. At that time names recorded as Devlin, Donnelly, Tivomey have long since left the locality.

In 1855 Father Comillean had charge of the parish until 1859. Then Father Helcher until 1861 when Father Bayard was here for a short time. Father Lawrence filled in the space until the appointment of Virgilius Devlin O.S.B. in 1862 until 1865. Father Hannett was parish priest during 1866 and part of 1867 when Father Donovan and Scanlan controlled it until the appointment of Father Gauthier. He saw that this church was too small and then he built on a Sacristy to the side of the church and many followed Mass by sitting in the Sacristy. It was built out from the Sanctuary and the doors were left open. He had a tower built back of the church and had a small bell placed on it. On September 10th 1871 he has a record of a Confirmation Class of one hundred and fifty six, consisting of seventy five boys and eighty one girls confirmed by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Walsh. In this class the first name is Nicholas Dixon, later Father Dixon.

In October 1872 Father P. J. O'Shea had charge until June 1873. He was succeeded by Father Delehanty who bought a site for the present church from Geary farm. He was assisted by Father Fitzpatrick for the last six months. He laid the corner-stone of the present church in 1874.

The next year Rev. F. J. Ouellette superintended the building of the church and had the church opened and dedicated to St. Mary. He sold the old church and it was used as a Blacksmith Shop and later as an Implement Shop. It was afterwards burned down.

Father Molphy succeeded him in October 1881 until January 1884.

During his pastorate he built the new priest's home. The old home built by Father Gauthier had never been finished and it was now sold as private property. Just before he left he took a vacation of six months and went to Ireland and left Father E. J. Hodgkinson in his place until June 1884 when Father John O'Connor was made parish priest. He worked hard to pay off a very large debt which was on the church. Shortly before his death he proudly announced that there was not a cent of debt on the church. On the 4th of May 1890 after a very short illness he died and his remains were interred in his home cemetery at Pickering.

Father D. P. McMenanim came in July 1890. He saw that some of the young men of the parish needed a guiding hand. To accomplish the best good he formed a "Literary Society" and had those youths as members and by studying plays etc. he tried to use up their super-abundant energy and lead them along lines less given to mischief. He left the parish in 1892 when Rev. C. E. McFee took charge. He had the church decorated. He installed a couple of heating systems and established the three separate schools. In doing all this he again contracted debt but had the satisfaction of having it all cleared off. He left in January 1897 for a visit to Ireland and left P. L. L'Heureux in his place for six months. He continued until July 1904 when he was removed to Stratford. Before he left he bought the corner lot from Father C. Collins and built the parish hall.

Since then the parish has been governed by Rev. P. McCabe. The work in separate schools was continued, a new front was built on the church to serve as a belfry. A new bell was purchased. A new heating system, the Delcoe was installed also a new lighting system. The old ones were very unsatisfactory. The church has lately been newly plastered, roofed and decorated. The priest's house has also been embellished. It has now beautiful lawns, and a fine grove of Maples to the back so that it presents a very neat appearance.

Essex was separated from Maidstone in 1919 and to-day the parish numbers one hundred and forty five families and six hundred and twenty five souls. The parish has given

*three priests to the church viz: -  
Fathers Lhernan, Father Dixon and  
Father Collins - and a great number  
of Sisters*

*P. McCabe P.P.*

*Oct 25<sup>th</sup> 1922*