

URCSS #7 (St. Mary's or Rag town)

1825- is the earliest record of a school located in the Maidstone area. Records indicate it was built on lot 297 and was a log structure 20 X 40 ft.

1870- By the 1870's the early settlers of Maidstone & Oldcastle who had followed the typical pattern of settlement, constructing shelters, building roads, clearing land for food production and market availability, and had met their spiritual needs by raising of Churches were ready to turn to the next factor of growing importance, that of educating the children.

The little school named SS (school section) #7 had a primitives start as everything else did in the deep woods of Essex County. At its closing the school was located on the Northeast corner of Number three Highway and the Sexton Side road.

SS#7 or the Rag Town school as it was sometimes called was built in 1870 from the readily available logs of the Essex County woods by the local settlers. There is some dispute by early local historian as to the location of the original school. Some locate it across the road from this site (present the farm of Frank Lafferty) while another account places it on the farm of a Tom Lennon (the writer of this 194- account places a Mrs. Patrick McLean as presently located on the original site).

An exact date of the original school's erection is not recorded, some idea of its general age can be obtained through the lifespan of an early pioneer John McAuliffe who attended the school in 1877 and returned in 1892 to teach in it.

The school had its original start as a public school and was staffed by lay teachers (all whom were Catholic). Some of the early teachers besides Mr. McAuliffe were Miss Nellie Moynahan, Miss Agnes MCLAughlin, Alfred Halford, Mary Sullivan, Rose Barrate, Mrs. Thomas Sexton, Margaret Halford, Mary Jane McHugh and Miss Lynch.

1902- the separate schools were started. Since this school section was 90% Catholic it was changed to a separate school

1908- during summer vacation the school burned down

1909- a one room school was completed on lot 299 (Northeast corner of Hwy 3 & the Sexton Side road) across from the present day Frank Lafferty farm

1918- a second room was added on

Jan.3, 1930- In answer to Fr. Stroeder Parish Priest of St. Mary's in Maidstone appeals to London for teaching sisters and the sisters of St. Joseph were sent . These were Srs. St. Peter Troy, St. Martin McGrenere, Geraldine Hanlon, Eugene Bond and Marguerite Sullivan. At the time the school is described as typical rural with no electricity, no inside plumbing drinking water had to be pumped from a well (sulphur water!)

1935 records indicate there was a High School Division at No. 7

1936 – the Trustees decided to install electricity in the school

1940- the High School Grades 11 and 12 were discontinued at the end of June but grades 9 & 10 continued.

1943- a piano was purchased for the school

1945- the area system for Maidstone & Sandwich South for separate schools came into effect in December and was named Separate School Union Area.

1950- a record player was purchased

1951- the school board met in February to consider building a new school or making much needed repairs and renovation to the old school. There was still no indoor plumbing, so obtaining drinking water was a problem. For example, one day when no water was available, Mr. Michael McCloskey brought a tub of fresh water in the trunk of his car. The pupils had to line up for a precious drink.

1957- the enrolment continued to increase St. Mary's No. 7 now had 74 pupils

1960- because of the overcrowding in all area schools it was decided by the board to build a new two room block and masonry school in the village of Maidstone, situated on #3 Highway behind St. Mary's Church and St. Joseph's Convent alongside the cemetery. The new school was to be called St. Mary's School and the old SS#7 St. Mary's was renamed St. Malachy. The school accommodated about 80 pupils in two classrooms and included a teachers room and washroom facilities. The contract was awarded to the Shepley Construction Company of Paquette for \$46,200.

1961- January 6th the new St. Mary's was open for business. The trustees were Ted Byrne, James Markham, Gerrard McCarthy, Emmett McLean and Earl Cahill

1963 – a special meeting of the rate payers was held. A big decision had to be made. Do we repair SS#7 and the other two room schools in the separate school section or do we build a central school? A very heated meeting followed with some wanting to maintain their small community schools and others for creating a larger central school. The Ratepayers voted 40-25 in favour of closing SS#7 and adding on 6 more classrooms to St. Mary's School in Maidstone.

August 27th 1963- the contract was awarded to H.T. Reaume of Tecumseh at an estimated cost of \$96,000 to add on four classrooms to the right and two rooms to the left of the existing classrooms with an office, nurse's room, and janitor's room in the center.

December 6 1963- last school day at St. Malachy's school SS#7

January 1964- St. Malachy's was sold to Emmett McCarthy with its site of two acres of land and later sold to be converted into a home and today is the residence of the Pringle family.

July 1967- tenders put out to build an addition on to St. Mary's for the second time

April 24th 1968- the 4-room addition to St. Mary's was officially opened –consisting of 1 kindergarten room, 1 library and 1 gymnasium- the cost \$180,000.

February 1987- Last call for sulphur water! The famous sulphur water that had haunted the school from the days of SS#7 to the St.Mary's School in Maidstone and ran in the veins from one generation to the next was finally replaced by pure clear water. Over the P.A. of the School came the announcement: "Last call for sulphur water". This was followed by a general rush for the taps.