

When it all began in 1942

Mass was celebrated for the first time in Colborne's St. Francis de Sales Roman Catholic Church on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1942.

The building was the former home of the late Hon. W. A. Willoughby, MPP, and was purchased from the state of the late G.E.R. Wilson. At the time of the opening, extensive alterations had already been made, but only half of the accommodation was ready for use at opening.

The Reverend John V. Ryan planned and supervised building changes. Much of the work was done by the men and boys of the parish.

Jane Boreham recalls her father Ed Roddy traveling to Kingston for two large timber beams to shore up the building.

After the volunteers had installed the timbers, Mr. Roddy had declared, "She'll stand forever now."

The sign on the front lawn of the church was installed by a Mr. P. Haley in 1961.

Notes from the 1972 Catholic Women's league history indicate other accomplishments for 1972 included the installation of plumbing facilities, buying new vestments for the priest and the 1966 installation of padded kneeling benches and vinyl carpet for the aisles.

In 1974, the present organ was purchased.

In 1981, the interior of the church was repainted, and aluminum siding added in 1992.

The bell rung to call people to service was donated by Ray Kelly's grandfather.

The beautiful stained glass windows the church, many dedicated as memorials, will be removed from the church building and reinstalled at St. Mary's, Grafton. The pews will be sold with the building.

At one time, an old organ sat in a corner of the interior of the old home converted to church. "Annie Roddy fought with that organ for many years of playing," Mrs. Cor-

bier recalled. Then there was the oil stove that once sat in another corner of the sanctuary. When it exploded, the CWL members were left with an interior coated with thick oily soot. "It was quite a job cleaning that up," Mrs. Corbier recalled. There were occasional wildlife congregants, too. One Sunday, the men had to remove a snake from the interior before parishioners would

move inside. On another Sunday, a jubilant puppy raced in through the open sacristy door. Removed the same way, the enthusiastic canine circled the building and reentered through the front door. Ejected again, all doors shut, the service proceeded, although, "It got hellishly hot in here," Mrs. Corbier noted. Anne Redegeld was married in the church. Last Sunday, she was serving punch to those attending.

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"It was in April," she recalled of the marriage ceremony. "It was not hot, but it was nice enough we could be outside for the photos. That was 40 years ago." Mr. Redegeld passed away two years ago.

One Sunday morning, altar boys Andy Fawcett and Jeff Sayers were on duty. As Jeff lifted the sacristy bell during the Mass, the internal clapper shot out of the bell, rattling across the floor. Andy, hardly missing a beat, scooped the clapper up and threw it back to Jeff. The bell was reassembled but the bell was very tenuously rung thereafter.

"We have new sacristy bells since then," noted Tass Corbier.

"The candy man", a gentleman who came to church with a few candies for the kids initially, wound up buying large

bags of candy to bring to Sunday service as both adults and children came to expect the treats.

"You may have noticed you don't have much room for your legs in these pews," Tass continued. "One priest decided we needed more room in here and personally unscrewed and adjusted the pews to fit in more, and then reattached them. That's why there's not much room."

In the early days of the Colborne church, the upstairs of the former home was used as a gathering place. Euchres were held.

The place was filled to capacity until the fateful evening when the entire corner of the building settled downward a full six inches from the weight of the crowd. That was the last euchre party to be held upstairs and the space has

since been used for storage.

"There is no doubt about, we are upset" about the closure of the Colborne Catholic church," Mrs. Corbier said. "But, we need to remember the good times, the happiness."

Afterward, as people mixed and reminisced, Tass Corbier said, "I'm sure after we've had some time to grieve for this church, we will fit in very nicely in St. Mary's. We just need a little time. After all, it's just a building."