

Doors re-opened for those attending Oustic R.C. church



ST. PETER'S R. C. church in Oustic is one of history and architectural beauty. After a year's closing it was re-opened last September and a growing congregation attends regular Sunday services. Inserts show Father J. Olinsky talking to a parishioner after service, and the beautiful circular balcony of the district church.

Within the portals of a church built in 1883, a living church is being resurrected and, after a year of closing, is once again operating as a flourishing community place of worship, drawing in a large weekly congregation.

St. Peter's Roman Catholic church in Oustic has long been considered one of the finest small churches, architecturally, in the Hamilton Diocese. It was built in 1883 in the heart of a Roman Catholic community but its history is much older.

A small group of pioneers, some of them Catholic, settled in the Rockwood and Oustic areas, about the same time that the royal city of Guelph was first being colonized. The Jesuit Fathers came to Guelph in 1852 and began looking after the Catholics scattered over vast areas including nearby Rockwood and Oustic. The Catholics in the two centres trekked to Guelph for divine service for the most part but were also able to attend Mass, on occasions, in private residences.

Shortly after the establishment of the church in Guelph, a small building was obtained in Rockwood village and converted for church use. It was given the title Sacred Heart church. St. Peter's church, Oustic, was completed in 1883. Both churches were tended by the Jesuit Fathers.

Oustic attached to Acton When Acton was established as a parish in 1893, the Oustic charge was attached to Acton as a mission. The Sacred Heart church in Rockwood continued to be administered by Church of Our Lady, Guelph, until it was constituted a parish in 1936 at which time Oustic was attached as a dependent mission. The arrangement continued for some time with little increase in Catholic families in the area.

In a newspaper documentary written in 1956 it says, "Although during World War II, the Rockwood Oustic parish has experienced a very small increase in Catholic population, it continues to be a relatively small parish of 42 Catholic families with about 142 souls. This figure is approximately the same as it was at the time of the establishment of the parish in 1936. In future years, it is possible that this parish may grow, since the City of Guelph population is growing towards the boundaries of the parish at the present time."

At the time of the article, the Rev. Aloysius Callaghan was in charge. For several years he divided his time between the two congregations. Little by little the attendance waned.

With the coming of Father Elliott into the area a few years ago changes occurred. He was put in charge of two parishes: one at Erin and the other, the combined parish of the Rockwood and Oustic churches. The new priest implemented Saturday night Masses but, with the Oustic congregation already down to a minimal number of people the split was too much for the small farming community. Farmers were unable to attend the Saturday Masses and gradually only a few people were attending.

Decision made to close Father Elliott reached his decision to close the Oustic church approximately two years ago. The congregation was requested to attend Sacred Heart in Rockwood. Little by little, interior furnishings of the historical building at Oustic were removed. Statues symbolic of the Roman Catholic tradition were placed in a back area of the church and several articles were taken into homes of families whose ancestors had been the donors. Unhappy parishioners were dismayed at seeing their place of worship closed down but, as the ecclesiastical furnishings were removed, the barren building was boarded up with the next step, putting it on the market for sale.

Many residents of the Oustic hamlet remembered when the local church was the important centre in the area. They felt a historical building was being disallowed without effort being made to retrieve what had been lost. Bishop Paul Redding was contacted a number of times by those who felt the church should be re-opened.

Approximately one year ago, new hope moved in on the horizon of the Oustic congregation. Father A. J. Olinsky was brought to the

parish to be in charge of the Rockwood-Oustic churches only. He came with the intent of ministering to the needs of the people and arrived full of energy and zeal. The priest met his congregations, saw the churches and acted.

Today the doors of St. Peter's are open with regular Sunday masses held at 11 a.m. drawing great numbers of people. The parking lot at the back of the church hosts many cars and, as the 12 noon Angelus bell peals forth from



STAINED GLASS windows in the historical church are ornate and beautiful.

the belfry, it tells a story of rebirth of a church which is no longer dead.

Restoration Father Olinsky is modest about his part in re-establishing the Oustic church. His philosophy is that restoration begins with faith and, under his leadership, work parties are bringing the beautiful old building back into shape.

The exterior has been worked on and wood areas painted. The vintage bells donated 75 years ago have been re-claimed to work perfectly. Stone steps at the side of the church have been re-built and, as the outside is completed, the interior is also showing signs of improvement. Red carpet has been purchased and graces both entry hall and aisle to the church chancel. Next step is painting the walls and already congregation members are making plans for that.

A ways and means committee has been formed. The group, under direction of chairman, Richard Halliburton, is planning ways of raising money for restoration completion. A thermometer graph placed at the back of the church indicates that, to date, members of the congregation have donated \$1,500 towards renovations.

At one time the church was heated by a wood stove. Today's heating system is electric—another newly installed item. What is pleasing to parishioners and their priest is that restoration in the old church simply means a return of the original. Built in Romanesque design it boasts a circular balcony for extra seating, a beautiful circular altar rail and other original fixtures many of which have been retrieved from places of safekeeping. Father Olinsky's idea is to "bring-back," as opposed to "update" the original appearance of the church. Huge lanterns which once hung from the ceiling are being found; smaller lanterns which hung by windows will also be hoped be discovered and replaced.

Aspirations restored As the appearance of the church is restored so, it seems, are the aspirations, the faith, and the numbers of those attending. Coffee after services provides time for parishioners to fraternize and get to know each other. It is served faithfully each Sunday as another reach toward Christian friendliness introduced by Father Olinsky when he re-opened the church last September.

At this point it is obvious that the smaller church in Rockwood could not handle the combined congregations of both St. Peter's and Sacred Heart at the same time. The Oustic congregation is pleased that they can now stand alone as strong and self-supporting.

Although St. Peter's is enjoying its new status of independence, members of

both churches in the parish remain constant. Through the C.W.L. they hold joint affairs such as parish picnics, dances, etc. In September a mammoth antique auction

Placed carefully on a side wall of the church is a brand new sign, freshly painted with black lettering, ready for hanging outside at the front. It reads, "St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, Oustic, 1883, Sunday Mass 11 a.m., Rev. A. J. Olinsky."

The sign is donated by William McCann whose grandfather drew one of the first stones used as a foundation for the building. Mr. McCann always felt the Oustic church should have a sign but one was never placed. Tourists visiting the area would have to make enquiries to learn about times of service.

It seemed appropriate to Mr. McCann that, at this time of fixing-up, such a sign should be made. It will be hung sometime this week and will be one way of advertising that the church is now open once again, welcoming all visitors and residents in the Oustic community to enter and participate in its fellowship.

"Absolutely disgraceful," was the remark passed several times. Some said the cemetery has not been kept up this year and felt for such an important event it should have been specially manicured.

Grass too high

High grass and an over-abundance of weeds raised concerted efforts after last Sunday's Decoration Day service held at the Rockwood cemetery. Several village and district residents attending the ceremony said they were going to write the village trustees and com-

plaint. "Absolutely disgraceful," was the remark passed several times. Some said the cemetery has not been kept up this year and felt for such an important event it should have been specially manicured.

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Comin' and Goins

A drop-in at the home of Vincent and Ruth Price in the village shows them to be home again after a few months of visiting in the south with family members. They are both looking chipper and great and friends will be happy to know they are back in the village again.

The Death family including Ray, Betty, Ken, Ronny and granddaughter Amanda, enjoyed a tour to Blythe via their '39 Plymouth recently. Sixty carloads of people enjoyed a Saturday evening dance, an early-morning barbecued breakfast and a tour of the country including a visit to a leather and wool plant. As usual, the antique car buffs had a wonderful time and are getting cars in shape for more summer car rallies.

Members of the Rockwood and area Bible study group had their morning coffee 100 miles from home last week when they decided to pay a visit to the home of a former member, Mrs. Wilma Williams.

Mrs. Williams moved to London with her husband, the Rev. Ralph Williams, about a year ago. He was minister of the United Church here and also president of the Sunshine Club.

Word is that the couple are now settled into "big city life." They are enjoying both the activities of their new church and community and their special role as loving grandparents. Their only son and family live close by.

Chatting over village happenings and catching up on news of friends and neighbors occupied much of the visit. The guests enjoyed a delicious potluck luncheon served by the hostess who sends her best wishes back to Rockwood to her and her husband's many friends.

Parents are asked to note there has been a change in the date of the vacation Bible school. It will be held during the last week of the summer

vacation and organizers are anxious that all children make a point of enrolling.

A busload of little people travelled to Marineland last Friday and enjoyed the day visiting the Niagara area. The grades four and five students of Rockwood Centennial school had their annual outing and students bubbled with excitement when they arrived home around 6 p.m. anxious to explain the delights of the day's activities.

It's welcome home to Anne Vos who is back in Eden Mills once again after her sojourn in the hospital. Word is that she's not completely recuperated but friends will be pleased to know she is home.

Great also to note is that Ev Barden is around in the village again looking chipper after her recent stay in the hospital. Welcome home to you too, Ev.

The Eden Mills community centre was jumping last Wednesday evening when a large number of villagers attended the community shower for the popular Judy Bould.

Guide leader Diana Wallace has returned to Eden Mills after her four weeks away. Diana and her 13-year-old son, Shane visited relatives and friends in Diana's hometown of Potters Bar, Hertfordshire, England. For Shane, it was his first-time visit to the seashore at Devon. "Fantastic visit," said the pair and Diana has mixed emotions about being home. "We arrived in England at the end of April just when all the flowers were out and cherry blossoms were in full bloom." According to Diana it's the kind of England poets write about.

G.R.C.A.

The increasing number of tent trailers and larger campers using conservation camping grounds is causing concern for the Grand River Conservation Authority. Because the units require water, sewage and electrical conveniences, they are placing a heavy load on available facilities at peak times.

With more and more units coming on the market, the GRCA says more demands are being made and a decision will have to be made on whether facilities in the parks will be extended or lines drawn on what can be offered to the campers.

Free Press Rockwood and District

Parish picnic planned at closing CWL meeting

Nineteen members attended the June meeting of the Rockwood and Oustic Catholic Women's League held at the home of Mrs. Francis Coppes. President Mrs. A. Stokman opened the meeting with prayer and reports were given. The treasurer's report showed that profit made on the Stanley Brush demonstration, held at a recent meeting, amounted to \$37.35.

Correspondence was read. A letter from the sisters of St. Joseph regarding the foster child in Guatemala was discussed and a motion was made that the C.W.L. should adopt a new child named Cesar Calderon Lopez which the sisters have chosen. The last child had left the sister's care.

Health unit now checking units

Manned with a spade and prepared to dig if necessary, representatives of the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Health unit are in the village this week checking out septic systems and taking water samples.

According to Rockwood trustee, Pat Smith, Main St. will be thoroughly checked from limit to limit. Men making the rounds are prepared to dig and investigate where they feel it is required.

Bible school discussed

Mrs. Richard Halliburton gave a report on the annual convention held this year in Hamilton. She outlined two days of activities. A note from Mrs. S. Drijber regarding Bible school in Rockwood was read and discussed. This was followed by a Bible reading given by president Stokman.

A motion was made that the price of tickets for the C.W.L. dance set for Oct. 18 be raised from \$5 to \$6 per couple. It was decided that a complimentary C.W.L. membership be given to Mrs. Mary McFaul, a resident at Eden House. Members learned the travelling basket for St. Martin's Manor

realized a profit of \$37 this year.

After discussion it was decided to break for the summer and hold the next meeting in September at the home of Mrs. William Gillilan. Mrs. Bernice Bacon will be in charge of notes or cards sent to the sick of the parish.

Parish picnic Minutes of the meetings will be put in the Sunday bulletins for all parish women to read. The decision that the annual parish picnic will be held the third Sunday of August met with approval of all members.

Talent money was discussed. Time of returning money has been extended to October so that all members may complete their projects. It was decided to send a card of congratulations to Father Elliott, the former parish priest, who will celebrate an anniversary on Sept. 7.

Mrs. H. Saunders explained the lottery that Bishop Macdonnell high school was having. A motion was made to purchase one for the Rockwood and Oustic C.W.L. Lunch was served by the hostess. Winner of the evening's lucky draw was Mrs. May Synnot.

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