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PENETANGUISHENE

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Penetanguishene - a look at the churches

Religion has always played an important part in the history of Penetanguishene. When the French fur-traders moved into the Huronia region in the 1600's the missionary priests were soon to follow. When Samuel de Champlain made a visit to the Huronia area in 1615 a Recollet priest, Father Joseph LeCaron came with him. Father LeCaron said the first mass on August 12 of that year under the open skies at Carhagouha (near the western shores of Penetanguishene Harbour). Shortly afterwards, another Roman Catholic order of priests, the Jesuits took over the missionary

work in the Huronia region and set up their central headquarters at Ste. Marie. From there, the Jesuit missionaries radiated outward, living in the villages of the surrounding Huron tribes, and winning converts to Christianity. In 1649 their missionary work was abruptly halted with the successful invasion of the Iroquois tribe. The Hurons were defeated and Ste. Marie destroyed. Eight of the Jesuit missionaries who were put to death by the Iroquois eventually became the first North American Saints when they were canonized by Pope Pius XI nearly 300 years later. For roughly 150 years

following the destruction of Ste. Marie, history books are silent on life in the Huronia area. Then in 1798 Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe arrived on the scene to purchase the Penetanguishene Peninsula from the Ojibway Indians for \$100. Shortly afterwards, the Naval and Military Establishment, which was the nucleus and the reason for Penetanguishene's growth as a settlement, was built. In 1837 the St. James-on-the-lines Church was built for the military troops stationed at the Establishment. Five years earlier St. Ann's Church, a modest

frame building, was constructed. It was built in honour of the visit Bishop MacDonnell, the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Ontario, to Penetanguishene in 1832. A 1907 historical sketch of Penetanguishene by A.C. Osburne credits Captain Moberly, a naval officer, as the driving force behind the construction of the St. James-on-the-Lines Church. Bishop Strachan consecrated the church in 1840. Reverend George Hallen, Chaplain to the Military, was the first rector. This series of photographs, which appear to have been taken the time of the publication of Osburne's historical sketch, shows four


of Penetanguishene's Churches. The Memorial Church, now called St. Ann's, is at the top left hand corner. Just below it in the center is the church of England. The center picture in the bottom row is that of the Presbyterian Church. The Methodist Church is centered towards the right side of the picture. The other pictures are of the Protestant Separate School, at the lower right hand corner, the Catholic Public School immediately to the right of the picture of the Memorial Church and the combined Fire Hall and Municipal building at the lower left hand corner of the page.

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