

Knights of Columbus

The Knights of Columbus began in 1882 as an insurance fraternity for immigrant Catholic working men at a time when anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant hostilities were great. Fr. Michael McGivney, the founder of New Haven, Connecticut, wanted more for his parishioners than insurance, however. Since they were not welcome in many institutions and industries, he wanted his parishioners to look out for each other. Time and labour were all the original Knights could offer each other, but as the organization grew throughout North America, they became more creative in their charitable endeavors.

The Knights chose Christopher Columbus as their role model since he was the Catholic discoverer of America. The “knightly” ideals of spirituality and service to the Church, county and fellow men were embraced by the founding fathers who emphasized that it was Catholics who discovered, explored and colonized the North American continent.

By 1900, the Knights of Columbus had established Councils in Montreal, Quebec City and Ottawa. Prior to 1909, Catholic men from Sarnia travelled to the Port Huron Council K. of C. George Dawson, a postmaster was elected the first Grand Knight of Sarnia Council 1429 and Joseph Dogon the first financial secretary. Joseph later became Mayor of Sarnia. Fire destroyed many of the early records of the K of C, but in 1918 the Council purchased a building on Lochiel S., now known as the Berger Block, for their meetings and activities. The building was sold in 1944, and the land on Queen and Talfourd Street was purchased where the K of C hall now stands. In 1953, the Council purchased 7 acres of land on Lake Huron which was used as a youth camp for many years.

The Knights of Columbus sponsored the Columbian Squires’ football team in Sarnia for many years. As well as the Boy Scouts, Big Brothers’ and Big Sisters’ Associations. Terry Fox Run, SMAA, Huron House Boy’s Home, Special Olympics, for the benefit of Youth. They also raised funds for the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Right to Life, Red Cross, In of the Good Shepherd. Easter Seals, Sarnia and District Association for Community Living, Missions, Pentecost 2000 and many other organizations too numerous to mention. In 1972, the Knights adopted the Canadian Arthritis as their principal, permanent charity and since that time, the Councils of Ontario have donated 15 million dollars to support its research programs.

On July 14th, 1966, a charter was granted to the Sarnia 1429 Council. It was to be known as the Monseigneur Joseph A. Cook Assembly to honour one of its prestigious supporters and beloved priest. Monseigneur Cook was Director of Catholic Social Services for many years. Monseigneur Cook exemplified a life of service to which every Knight of Columbus aspires.