

HISTORY OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD CATHEDRAL

PART IV

The Church of the Sacred Heart Stands Proudly

This closing chapter in the history of the building of our Cathedral Church begins with an outline of several key events in the history of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie, as the Canadian Catholic Church comes of age in the 19th Century.

The oldest parish in Ontario with continuous records is Assumption Parish, Windsor (Sandwich), which began in 1728 as a Jesuit mission for Huron Indians and which was formally erected in 1767 as a parish within the Diocese of Quebec, for Indigenous Catholics as well as French speaking settlers in the region.

The history of the English speaking Catholic Church began with the Glengarry settlement (often referred to as the 'cradle of Catholicism' in Canada), and the establishment of the Parish of St. Raphael's in 1785. The ruins of the once stately parish church of St. Raphael's, lie near present day Cornwall Ontario.



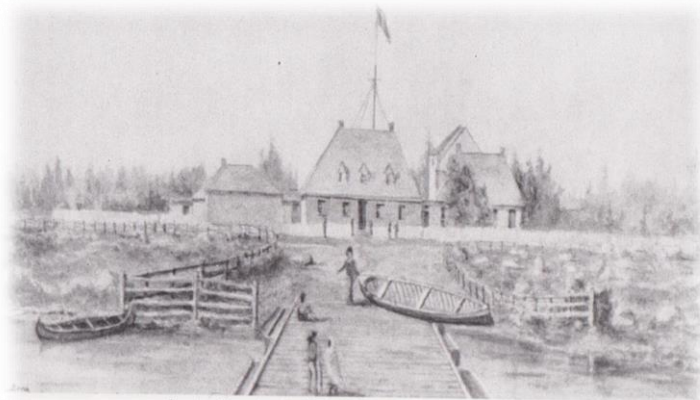
Bishop Alexander MacDonnell arrived from Scotland in 1804, to what was yet known as Upper Canada, and immediately set about to increase the church throughout the vast region west of Quebec. He became the first Bishop/Vicar General of Upper Canada in 1819, and was consecrated the first Bishop of the Diocese of Kingston in 1820. **He is referenced in Part III with respect to the 1834 letter of appeal from Canadian Sault Catholics for a Church on the north shore of the St Mary's River.** **ARCAT** (Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto)

Fig. 1: Bishop Alexander MacDonnell

The Roman Catholic Church west of Quebec began to stand alone in 1826, when the Diocese of Kingston was separated from the Diocese of Quebec. Further subdivisions saw the creation of the Diocese of Toronto in 1841, and Ottawa in 1847. The first Bishop of the Diocese of Toronto, Michael Power, recognized the vast territory to the northwest as being in need of the missionary zeal of the Jesuits, and wrote to the Superior General saying: ***"I would like to make of my Diocese, one vast Mission"***. As the population continued to grow, it was necessary to further divide the Diocese of Toronto, creating both the Dioceses of Hamilton and London in 1856, and eventually that of St. Catharines in 1858 in order to collect the growing parishes of the Niagara Peninsula. By 1841, Upper Canada was now known as 'Canada West' and would encompass all of what is today the province of Ontario. The Catholic faith was without doubt increasing.

Meanwhile, Sault Ste. Marie, on the north shore, once again recognized for its geographic importance as the hub of the expanding northwest region around Lakes Huron and Superior, was brought into several of the newly created Dioceses over the years; originally, into the Diocese of Toronto in 1841, then, into the newly erected Diocese of Hamilton in 1856 and finally, Kingston/Peterborough in 1882. During these early years, expansion was rapid, with hospitals and schools added to the parishes, churches and missions that marked this growth. The work of Bishop/Vicar General MacDonnell became legendary throughout those early years. He has been referred to by church historians as the ‘Apostle of Ontario’.

The years following the pastorate of Jesuit Father Jean Baptiste Menet were also years of growth and expansion for the village of Sault Ste. Marie, but not of much real prosperity. Earlier in the century, in 1837, writer **Anna Jameson**, visiting the area, was struck by the disparity between the American and Canadian sides of the river. After describing American developments, she commented:



“Nearly opposite to the American fort, there is a small factory belonging to the fur company; below this, a few miserable log huts occupied by some FrenchCanadian voyageurs in the service of the company. A set of lawless ‘mauvais sujets’, from all I can learn”.

Fig. 2 Hudson Bay Post (established by the North West Co. 1797)

It had long been recognized that the American side was ahead in terms of growth, even though in many ways, the ‘Saults’ still considered themselves one community. It is said that even the fur traders from competing companies were on friendly terms; however it would take longer for the Canadian side to begin to flourish.

The importance of the St. Mary’s River had always been front and centre in the growth of both communities, and as the old fur trade waned, the great new industrial age was emerging. The increasing discoveries and exploitation of the rich copper veins along the southern shores of Superior led the American Congress to eventually determine that it was necessary to improve access to the region’s great wealth. The State of Michigan, which had been lobbying the federal government for more than a decade for both the approval and the funds to build a proper lock, was finally allowed to create a right of way through the Fort Brady military reservation and to donate 750,000 acres to contractors in order to finance the building of the canal. A young, 24 year old salesman for a Vermont scale manufacturing company, Charles Harvey, was hired as General Agent in charge of building the first ship canal (known as the **State Lock**) in the United States. Construction began in 1853 and the need for

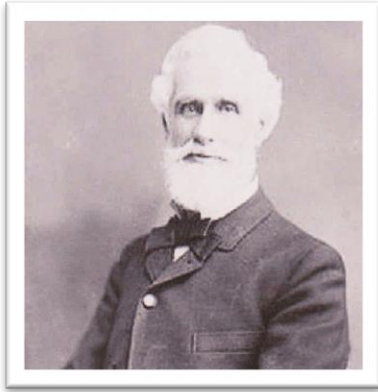
laborers was great. It is reported that foremen travelled to New York to recruit nearly two thousand European immigrants as they disembarked at Ellis Island. The lack of proper accommodation and sanitation necessary to handle such a large influx here, led to a serious Cholera epidemic. Finally, in 1855, after much difficulty leading to the replacement of Harvey, this first lock was completed. This event would mark the beginning of the diminishment of the beautiful rapids that has given us our historic namesake, as it would become necessary to provide ever greater capacity on the increasingly vital waterway. The second lock, known as the '**Wietzel**', completed in 1881, would provide the sandstone used in so much of the early construction on both sides of the river. Many of the larger pieces used for the building of the original central portion of our own Precious Blood Cathedral came from the construction site of this lock.

Canadian vessels engaged in regular shipping commerce, were allowed passage through the lock, however it was an international incident in 1870 that convinced the Canadian government that continued reliance on American infrastructure could easily jeopardize national security. The incident was created when a ship, '**The Chicora**' carrying troops under command of **Colonel Garnet Joseph Wolseley**, attempted to lock through the American canal on its way to Manitoba, to subdue the Metis Rebellion led by **Louis Riel**. Being a military venture, the United States refused The Chicora passage through the Lock, and Wolseley was forced to portage his men and munitions approximately six miles through dense swampy terrain over the old voyageur trail. Once emptied, the Chicora was allowed passage.

This incident led to Canada's decision to build The Canadian Pacific Railway, which eventually reached the Sault in 1887 and brought about the construction of the Canadian canal and lock. Thanks to the power of the rapids, this state of the art project became one of the first in the world to produce hydro-electricity to operate its machinery. From this point on, the Canadian Sault would see an unparalleled, if not long sustained, increase in prosperity. Sault Ste. Marie was also incorporated as a 'town' in 1887.

The above background is intended to provide a glimpse into the development of the emerging town that would welcome the beautiful new stone church, whose elegant spire would stand proudly near the river's edge in testament to the efforts of the Catholic community over the years.

Events leading to the erection of The Church of the Sacred Heart began with Father Menet's effort to secure the property on which his small church had stood since the early 1850's, but it was not until **Alexander Vidal's** official boundary setting survey of the Sault in 1846, that land title could be clearly established and recorded. Over the years, there has been much speculation surrounding the original ownership of the property on which Precious Blood now stands. There were stories that the church land had been given to the Jesuits by **Charles Ermatinger**. Further assertions were that the land had been donated by **Andrew Hynes**, the town's first constable, as well as by **Joachim Biron**, a well-respected Metis citizen, (shown in Fig. 10 of Part III). All of these individuals lived nearby and had early claims to land in the vicinity, and although it is possible that any or all of them may, in fact, have played a role in the establishment of ownership by the church, there has to date, been no clear evidence to verify these claims. There is however, strong anecdotal evidence that Biron was the likely benefactor.



In any case, Vidal's official 1846 plan of the Town of St. Mary's shows that land corresponding to the property purchased by Fr. Menet had always been used for a church and burial ground. (See: "A Plan of the Park Lots Adjoining the Town of St. Mary's, Crown Lands Dept., June 19, 1846")

Fig. 3: Alexander Vidal, Land Surveyor (1819 – 1906).

The 'Abstract Book', containing land title information, held by the Provincial Land Registry Office provides an interesting detail concerning Fr. Menet's purchase in July of 1857. It is recorded that he received from the Crown, a grant of 4 acres of land on Lot no. 25 and 1½ acres of the north part of Lot no. 26. The book records no payment for the land, but other records indicate that he paid the Crown the sum of 2 pounds 10 shillings. Originally, the land ran from the river's edge north over Water Street (Bay St. through Front St. (Queen St.) to the far north boundary of Wellington St. Father Jean Baptiste Menet now held the title deed to this land.

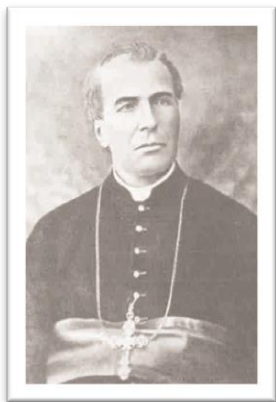


The interesting detail concerns the fact that he may not have intended the property to remain in trust for the Catholic Church, because upon his death, he willed the land to: Henri Hudson, Peter Hamel, both of the Jesuit College of St. Francis Xavier, New York, and John Cunningham of St. John's (Jesuit) College, Fordham, New York, (U.S.) *"Tenants in common, all that parcel of tract of land, as adjoining the Town of St. Mary's, containing by measurement – five and one half acres, be the same more or less; being composed of Lots no. 25 in the first concession in the aforesaid Town of St. Mary; also, the north part of Lot no. 26, to hold them, the said Henri Hudson, John Cunningham and Peter Hamel, their heirs and assigns, forever"*.

Fig. 4: copy of Deed signed and dated, by Jean Baptiste Menet.

This will appears to have been forgotten or disregarded in the belief that Menet had left the land for the Church; a reasonable assumption, since it was the site of the burial ground and the wooden frame church standing on it, which he had overseen to have constructed around 1850. These inexplicable facts are confirmed but were never clarified, yet when the will of Fr. Menet was eventually registered in the Land Office on the 7th of November, 1878, three years after the laying of the cornerstone of Sacred Heart Church, and on the same day; Henri Hudson et al, placed in the Registry Office, a 'Quit Claim' to the land, dated over a month earlier, on 2nd October 1878.

There is no additional explanation concerning these strange events, and we can only guess at the story leading up to the Quit Claim, but nonetheless, the land was signed over for one dollar to the **Rt. Rev. John Francis Jamot**, who had arrived in 1870 as the recently consecrated Vicar Apostolic of Northern Canada, and fortunately, the land was now legally in the possession of the Catholic Church.



The Rt. Rev. Jean Francois Jamot was ordained a priest in 1853, in his native France. While still there, he chanced to meet the visiting **Bishop of Toronto, Armand Francois-Marie de Charbonnel** to whom he expressed his desire to work in the missionary field in Canada. Following eight months in Ireland learning English, he arrived in Toronto in 1855. He was sent to Barrie as parish priest, and over the following eight years he assumed a thorough and effective leadership role which resulted in considerable growth of the church throughout this region now known as Canada West, building churches, schools, recruiting additional priests and religious orders and raising funds in support of this rapid growth.

Fig 5: Bishop/Vicar Apostolic Jean Francois Jamot

His diligence and obvious ability did not go unnoticed, and in 1860, he was appointed vicar-general to Bishop Charbonnel's successor, **John Joseph Lynch**. His next appointment, as rector of the yet unfinished, **St. Michael's Cathedral** in Toronto, saw the completion of the cathedral and continued growth of the Canadian Catholic church in both faith and prosperity. When, in 1874, at the strong urging of the Canadian Bishops, **Pope Pius IX** created the Vicariate of Northern Canada, Msgr. Jamot was appointed its Vicar Apostolic. The episcopal consecration took place at Issoudun, France in February of that year, and upon his return to Canada as **Bishop of Serepta**, he set about to develop a plan that would lead to a strong diocesan structure, much of which is in place today. It was a time of tremendous growth on all fronts and equally, a time of tremendous difficulty in creating a sustainable framework that would see the Church well positioned to enter the approaching 20th century. The complete story of Bishop Jamot's founding leadership and worthy accomplishments on behalf of the Church in Northern Canada requires more time and detail than can be presented here, but he was undoubtedly a man of great spiritual conviction and quality of purpose; and he was now the person in the position to see to the erection of the stone church that had been the desire of the Catholic faithful here for so many years.

Bishop Jamot's Canadian consecration was held at Wikwemikong on Manitoulin Island in February 1874, and he chose Sault Ste. Marie for his installation the following September. The ceremony was presided over by Archbishop Lynch, who accompanied him from Toronto. It is assumed that this installation took place in the small wooden Jesuit church, and it is said that the Bishop resided there for a time, with the Hynes family in a small apartment on the upper floor of the church building. To date there is no factual confirmation of this however a photograph taken at the laying of the cornerstone reveals what might be an attached dwelling at the rear of the old church. The unattributed anecdotal reference is that: *Mr. Bussineau was the builder of the original frame church, and Andrew Hynes and his family lived in the upper part for several years, while the Catholic community worshiped downstairs until 1875".*

In actual fact, it is known that Andrew Hynes owned much of the property along the east side of East Street, and the family lived for many years in a log home on the small street bearing their name just west of the Cathedral. This original home remained derelict for a number of years after the Hynes family moved to a new home on East Street, and was eventually destroyed by fire in 1952. Descendants of Andrew Hynes having claimed that he donated land for the church, further assert that it was his wish that the church be named for 'The Sacred Heart'.

Having chosen the Sault as his episcopal seat, Bishop Jamot set out almost immediately to prepare for the construction of the new, much larger stone church befitting his new role. He had been accompanied by two diocesan priests, to act as his assistants, **Fathers A. Canbone and M. Nadeaud** (spellings vary). These two priests set about almost immediately to prepare for the building of a new 'stone church' to replace the old frame building, while Bishop Jamot worked ceaselessly to raise funds for the support of his rapidly expanding vicariate, now covering vast territories from Fort William to Parry Sound, and in need of schools, hospitals, missions and churches. His task was monumental and the necessary travel tremendously difficult, forcing him to move his residence to Bracebridge and eventually on to Peterborough, where he would become the first Bishop of the Diocese of Peterborough, but not before seeing to the erection of the stately new **Church of the Sacred Heart**.

It has been said that the erection of both the Vicariate Apostolic as well as the Church of the Sacred Heart represented the transition from frontier to pioneer community and marked the end of one phase of the missionary era, and the beginning of parish development in Sault Ste. Marie. The exact date when the name 'Sacred Heart' was first used is not known, but the first explicit reference to it is an entry made by **Father Richard Baxter s.j.** in the Garden River diary, in which he records a marriage on December 28, 1863, between Daniel MacKay (McKie) and Mary Collins in the "Church of the Sacred Heart, Sault Ste. Marie Canada West" There is another identifying entry in the diary on January 20, 1867, where Father Kohler signs himself, "*Superior of the Mission of the Sacred Heart, Sault Ste. Marie, and of Garden River on the Canadian shore*". The dedication ceremony and laying of the cornerstone was a momentous occasion, and an entry in the 'House Diary' at Garden River records that:



Fig.6: Laying the Cornerstone at rear of old Jesuit church. July 4, 1875.

"The cornerstone of Sacred Heart Church, was laid at Sault Ste. Marie Ontario, on July 4, 1875. Archbishop Lynch, Father P. Laurent (pastor of St. Patrick's in Toronto) and Bishop Jamot, Vicar General of the Vicariate of Northern Canada performed the ceremony. Assisting, were Fathers Canbone, Kottman and Brother Lemay. The Children's Choir of Garden River provided the music, and nearly all of Garden River and the American Sault attended. The collection was over \$200.00.

Although no great detail exists concerning the actual construction of the church, it is believed that the work was supervised by Bishop Jamot himself from a design created by the prominent Toronto architectural firm of **Langley, Langley and Burke**. This firm designed many of the most prestigious 'gothic revival' churches and historic buildings of note in Southern Ontario at the time. It can be said that Precious Blood Cathedral ranks well among those that still stand today.

The following report taken from an 1875 local weekly newspaper, **'The Northern Light'** reads: *"Near the centre of our village fronting Queen Street, may be seen the Roman Catholic Cathedral almost finished. It was designed by **Langley, Langley & Burke of** Toronto and built by the **Law Building Company** - and certainly reflects the greatest credit on both architects and builders."*

Fortunately, there is reliable anecdotal information contained in the 'Letters of H. C. Hamilton' from the 1920's. In one particular interview at the time, **Mr. R. H. Carney**, whose family were early settlers in the Sault, and who resided for a time, nearby in the old Ermatinger home, described the demolition of the old frame building in preparation for construction and is quoted as saying:

"I remember quite clearly the old frame building, and saw it pulled down bodily, but have forgotten the year when it was demolished. I remember it was held up by long props reaching from the roof to the ground on one side of the building, as it was leaning. These props were pulled down and a long rope hitched to the roof and a team of horses pulled it over sideways. The old building was located within a few feet of where the present stone church stands. The cemetery on the south side of Queen Street, opposite the church, was in use when my grandfather came here about 1858".

Emery Boissineau, born in the Sault in 1838, records the graveyard as being used "long before he was born".

Also from a letter to Mr. Hamilton, dated July 1925, Father P. Monaghan explained that the buildings were put up through 'corvoys, or bees', and further description explains that: *"Some of the stones used in the building of the present church, erected in 1875, were hauled over the ice in carts from the excavation of the Weitzel lock on the American side of the river."*

The remainder of the stone as well as some of the labor was apparently donated by residents and parishioners. The simplicity of both style and materials was as much by necessity as it was by choice, the strong grey-red sandstone and timber being the principal building materials available. This beautiful sandstone brought up from the formation of our rapids is a lasting reminder of the ties we have with our ancient past.

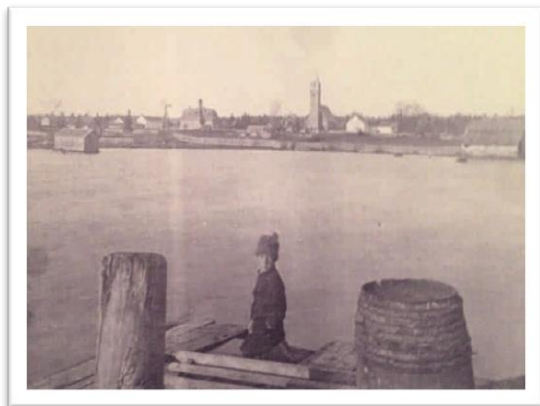
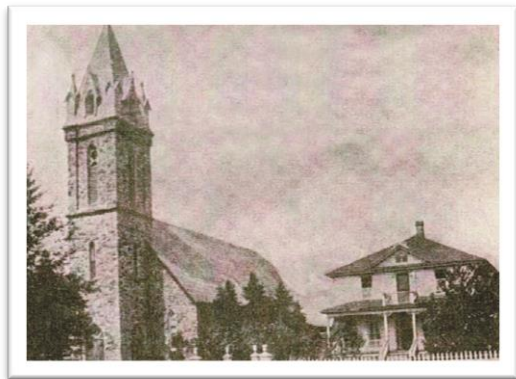


Fig. 7: View of new Church of the Sacred Heart from south shore of the St. Mary's River.

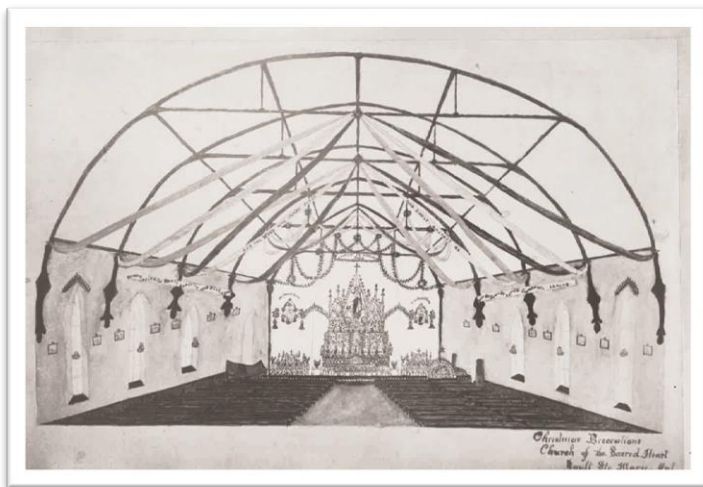
The design chosen by Bishop Jamot was also in the 'gothic revival' style, with a single nave, tall lancet windows, slate roof and an impressive bell tower; although it would be 28 years before a bell was finally placed in the tower. An 1887 photograph shows a building that looked much the same as it does today. The most striking feature of the church was the way it dominated the old skyline of the town. During these early years, for the most part, log and frame houses were the norm, and there were few other structures that could rival its sophistication.



Upon completion, the church had a seating capacity of approximately 500 and is said to have cost approximately \$12,000.00 to complete. Early photographs show that an impressive rectory was also built around the same time, although there is little recorded information concerning its construction, or exact date. This original 'parish house' served the clergy and faithful for seventy five years and was replaced in 1965.

Fig. 8: Church of the Sacred Heart and Rectory

The beautiful new church was dedicated to The Sacred Heart on July 30th 1876. Once again, the ceremony was presided over by **Archbishop Lynch**. Other dignitaries and clergy included **Bishop Crinnon** of Toronto and of course Bishop Jamot. There is information recorded by **Monsignor Crowley**, that the old cemetery still in use on the south side of Queen Street was also consecrated at this time.



There are no existing photographs of the 1875 church interior; however we are most fortunate to have a copy of a sketch showing the sanctuary and much of the nave, which appears to have been viewed from the choir loft. It may have been made shortly after the original construction and reveals how the church was decorated possibly for the first Christmas

celebration.

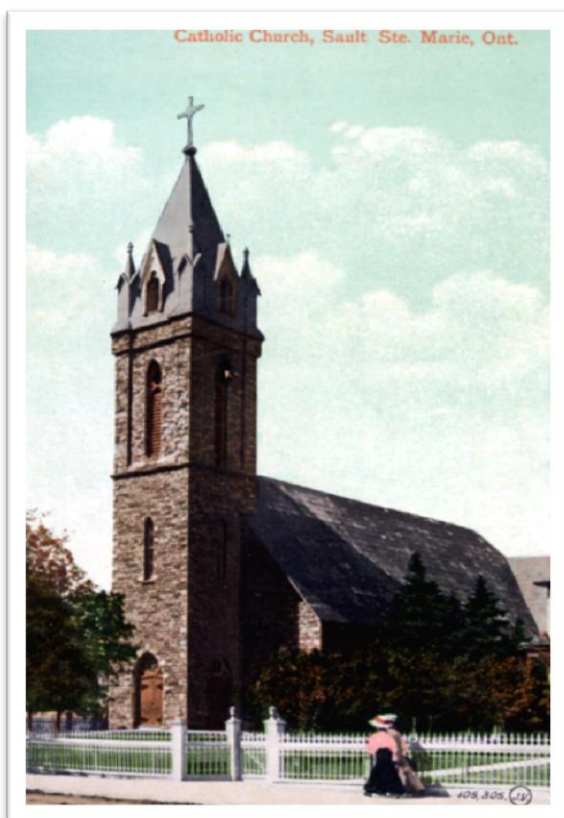
Fig. 9: Sketch of Interior of the original Church of the Sacred Heart.

In 1881 **St. Anne's Chapel** was added to serve as a vestry and also a winter chapel since without electricity, heating the main church was not possible. It was also used as a one room school until the original Sacred Heart School was built in 1889. The dimensions of this original chapel remain much the same today, although it has been remodelled over the years to suit its purpose. There have been a number of renovations, repairs and redecorations over the years however the most impressive renovation the church would undergo took place in 1901, when it became apparent that the church required greater capacity and modernization.

Father Albin Primeau s.j. (b. 1856), had arrived at Sacred Heart in 1895 as an assistant to Superior **Father Olivier Neault s.j.** and became Superior in 1896 at the age of 40. Under his administration, and under the jurisdiction of **Bishop O'Connor**, the church was enlarged through the addition of transepts to the north or sanctuary wall. This was a major undertaking and would add a space of 85' across by 42' deep, providing a new and impressive sanctuary, and seating for an additional 120 people. A vestry was added directly behind the east transept, which would serve until its replacement in the early 1930's.

A **Sault Star Article from November 21, 1901** provides the following coverage:

Remodelled Catholic Church to open Dec. 1st With Special Services.



*"The remodelled Catholic Church is nearing completion. It is the largest and finest structure of the kind in the Sault. A new wing 85' wide by 42' deep has been added to the old church, and the church will now have a seating capacity of about 650. Two new galleries have been put in, one on each side of the church, and 60 persons will find ample seating room in each of them. The sanctuary is 30' by 22' and is enclosed within a handsome carved communion rail and sanctuary screen. The floor of the sanctuary will be covered with a handsome Brussels carpet, costing over \$150 which is donated by **Mr. M Healey**. The beautiful 'rose' window over the altar was presented by **Mr. J.J. Kehoe**, and is of stained glass representing the crucifixion. Another stained glass window in the west side of the sanctuary contains a picture of the Immaculate Conception and was donated by*

Miss Mary Byrne".

Fig. 10: Photo of the Church of the Sacred Heart (early 1900's)

*“Each transept has a large gothic window 8’ by 19’, also of stained glass. The west window was donated by the **Catholic Order of Foresters** and contains a scene of the Flight into Egypt. A scene of Christ Blessing the Children in the east window was presented by the **Ladies of the Altar Society**.*

*A new vestry, sixteen by twenty five feet has been built, and the former chapel and vestry will in future be used exclusively as a winter chapel. The church will be heated by steam; Balck’s latest improved tubular heater being used. The old part of the church will be repainted and redecorated. Mr. H. Russel Halton of the Sault is the architect of the new church renovation and he also prepared the designs for the windows. Mr. **M. Healey is the contractor**. The total cost of the addition to, and redecoration of the Sacred Heart Church is reported to be about \$13,000.00.*

The opening of the new church will take place Sunday, December 1st and special services will be held. A pontifical high mass will be conducted by his lordship Bishop O’Connor in the morning. Special musical talent will be secured for the occasion. Father Primeau is endeavoring to have services conducted in both French and English, and there will likely be sermons preached by prominent priests in both languages.”

This momentous event for the Parish would bring it into the 20th century, especially with the addition of heating and likely, electricity at this time, if not earlier.



Fig. 11: Rt. Rev. R. A. O’Connor, Bishop of Peterborough

Closing events in the evolution of the diocesan structure are marked by the passing of Bishop Jamot in 1886. He had become the first bishop of the newly erected **Diocese of Peterborough** in 1882. He was succeeded briefly by the **Rt. Rev. T. J. Dowling**, and eventually by the **Rt. Rev. R. A. O’Connor**, who determined the need to separate the northern part of the still vast vicariate into a smaller and more manageable ecclesiastical area. Bishop O’Connor shared his thoughts with Sacred Heart parish, when, in 1901, he presided over the blessing of the newly enlarged and renovated church.

Once again, **The Sault Star**, in its **December 7, 1901** edition described the ceremony, with the header:

Diocese is to be Divided:

“On Sunday the enlarged church of The Sacred Heart was formally opened and blessed by his Lordship Bishop O’Connor, of Peterborough, and thus Father Primeau has seen carried to completion a very necessary work and one that was very dear to his heart. In the morning His Lordship performed the ceremony of blessing the church by going around it inside and out, sprinkling it with holy water, accompanied by priests and the altar boys in procession. Pontifical High Mass followed with Fr. Lussier of Sudbury acting as deacon, and Fr. Brault s. j. as sub-deacon. Father Proulx, of the American Sault, preached a sermon in French.

Bishop O'Connor gave a sermon of an instructional character. His Lordship referred to the financial condition of the Church. The total expense in connection with the rebuilding of the church is approximately \$13,000.00, about \$4,500 of which has been subscribed, and of these subscriptions, \$3.200 has been paid in. At Vespers His Lordship preached a sermon on the divinity of the Roman Catholic Church, and quoted freely from the scriptures. He pointed out the necessity of the confessional and urged all church people to be particular about religious matters. His sermon was an intellectual treat. The Sunday collection was \$150. The singing at the Sunday services was done by **Mrs. Ryan, Miss Kelly** and some other ladies from the American Sault, assisted by the choir.

On Monday evening in the church there was a large congregation present and **Judge O'Connor** was chairman. **Mr. J. J. Kehoe** presented an English address on behalf of the parish, while **Mr. Phillip Gagnon** read one in French. ***In his address Mr. Kehoe referred to the fact that Mr. Joachim Biron who had donated the site for the church years ago, would occupy till his death the best pew in the church free of charge as a slight token of the congregations gratitude.** **Mr. A. P. Monahan** then came forward and read the address of the Catholic Order of Foresters.

Mrs. Shields presented the address of the Ladies of the Altar Society, while little Miss Lizzie Smith gave to His Lordship a beautiful bouquet of flowers on their behalf. The next address was from the school children. The Bishop responded to these addresses in eloquent terms, thanking the donors for their kind wishes. He praised Father Primeau's unflagging zeal and that of his assistant, Father Hazelton, and then made an important announcement with regard to the division of the parish at no distant day. **He alluded to the church looking like a cathedral, and prophesied that it would be a cathedral in fact, before many years went by.** Perhaps, he said, Father Primeau and Father Hazelton might be the first bishops of the new diocese. His present diocese was the largest in the province and he was in favor of setting up a new diocese in this end of it with the Soo as its cathedral town. He would certainly recommend to the Fathers of the Church in Rome that this town be chosen as the seat of the new diocese which would extend from about North Bay to Port Arthur. The musical portion of the service was as follows: an opening organ solo by **Mrs. Shields**, the organist, a vocal solo by **Miss Pim**, a hymn by the choir and a closing march on the organ by Mrs. Shields."



His petition to the Holy See was finally answered, and on September 16, 1904 the new Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie was erected with the **Rev. D. J. Scollard, pastor of St. Mary's of the Lake Church in North Bay, named as its first Bishop.** Rev. David Joseph Scollard was consecrated in February 1905 in St. Peter's Cathedral, Peterborough, and took formal possession of his new diocese on March 5th 1905, when, accompanied by Bishop O'Connor he made solemn entry into **Sacred Heart Church, Sault Ste. Marie; now the Diocesan Cathedral.**

Fig. 12: David Joseph Scollard, First Bishop of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie.

The following excerpts are taken from The Sault Star of November 31, 1904:

“The Rt. Rev. David J. Scollard is the son of Mr. John Scollard, and Catherine O’Connor, of Ennismore, and was born near Peterborough on Nov. 4, 1862. He is 42 years old, a more than usually early age to be elevated to the dignity of a prelate of the Church. The fact of his being taken from the ranks of the simple priesthood, without having received the intermediate ecclesiastical dignities is a striking practical tribute to his worth and work. He was ordained a priest by Bishop O’Connor at St. Martin’s Church, Ennismore, on Dec. 21, 1890, and was appointed eight years ago, parish priest to the important parish of North Bay where he has labored with great zeal and with corresponding success. This summer, he completed at North Bay a large eight room school, and has a splendid new church now well on the way to completion – an imposing structure, built of Longford stone. Rev. Fr. Scollard is highly esteemed by his brother clergy for his piety and zeal. He is an indefatigable worker and has always been held in affectionate reverence by his people.

He has excellent qualifications for his high office. His parish and his diocese have a mixed population and he is able to preach in both the English and French languages. He is endowed with the rare gift of good common sense, excellent administration and business ability and great tact. Altogether, he is a man of well-balanced mind and with his piety, zeal and physical energy, is admirably qualified to discharge the excellent duties of the high and holy trust to which he has been advanced. The Sault would join his host of friends and admirers in congratulations to himself, his family, this community and the church upon the fact that a man and a priest, so abundantly worthy from a human point of view, has been selected as first Bishop of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie.”

The same article reported on Bishop O’Connor’s remarks as follows:

*“When Bishop O’Connor announced the division of the Peterborough diocese, he pointed out that in the last few years, that portion of the diocese known as ‘New Ontario’ had enjoyed a rapid increase of population. The farming lands had been occupied and the factories were employing many hands, and the increased population had spiritual needs which must be met. **He also pointed out that the present Diocese of Peterborough was of great extent – stretching from the southeast to the northwest, approx. 1,100 miles, and it made a larger demand on a bishop than one man was able to meet. Some idea of the work to be done was afforded by the fact that in the last fifteen years, over fifty new churches had been erected in the northern part of the diocese alone.** He was quite willing to undertake all the duties imposed upon him, but it was almost physically impossible for one man to attend to all the affairs of so large a diocese. He thanked God that there had been such great growth as to render the division of the diocese necessary. **He has asked the Holy Father to make the division, and the new diocese would be designated The Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie, with the town of the same name as the cathedral city. This new diocese would be comprised of the districts of Nipissing, Algoma and Thunder Bay and be quite large, at approx. 800 miles in length.** It would have a larger Catholic population and would require as Bishop, a younger man of great physical ability and holy zeal. He believes that this demand would be met with the selection by the Holy Father of the Rev. Father Scollard. The Bishop paid*

a strong and eloquent tribute to the excellent qualifications of Fr. Scollard. "It was something for Peterborough to be proud of, that a priest in the county had been selected for the high office of Bishop".

Due to a lack of priests (only 6 secular and 25 Jesuits) in the new diocese, it was necessary for him to continue on as parish priest of St. Mary's North Bay, while assuming the onerous duties of his episcopacy. **At the time, the new Church of the Assumption was under construction to replace the older St. Mary's, and upon its completion in December of 1905, it became known as the Pro Cathedral, being the familiar 'seat' of our first Bishop, and has remained as such over the years.**

It is hoped that the story of the founding of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie and the building of our much loved Cathedral Church, will not only inform but more importantly encourage us to honor and preserve those ideals of faith and selfless devotion which have provided us with such a rich heritage.

We are now living the future of those who came before. Only the present is ours, and this is our time and our opportunity to foster and safeguard this faith journey into the 21st century, for all those who follow.

IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

IF NOT US, WHO?

