

RELIGIOUS TEACHING SISTERS IN HURON-PERTH SCHOOLS

They Came, They Served, They Departed

“Almost as quietly as they arrived, did they depart from our institutions of learning, leaving behind a rich legacy that we must cherish and protect.”

The passage of the British North America Act in 1867 gave Catholics the right in law to separate schools but this right was a very limited one confining Catholic schools to function on a starvation diet of local property taxes and puny legislative grants. Egerton Ryerson predicted that the relative poverty of Catholic ratepayers would eventually wear down their patience and separate schools would not succeed. Why was this not the result? The answer lies in the intervention of active religious communities committed to their vows of poverty and service devoting their lives to teaching separate school children. By working for salaries well below the prevailing wages, they saved Catholic education from extinction in Ontario. These teaching Sisters are a critical part of OUR STORY.

The selfless devotion of the Sisters ensured that our classrooms were filled, curriculum was taught, and the Catholic faith was modeled and instilled in our children. Today, the religious have been entirely replaced by lay teachers and our students have only witnessed pictures of these nuns in their traditional habits.

In the 1850's, the Diocese of London welcomed several religious orders to help build a network of schools. We were blessed in the counties of Huron and Perth to work closely with the Loretto Sisters, officially known as members of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM), Sisters of St. Joseph and the Ursuline Sisters. Those early years were particularly difficult as the

Catholic schools faced a great deal of public criticism and acrimony. They were only receiving a small percentage of the public purse. In many cases, the innovative Sisters somehow managed to deliver more with less. The religious orders provided the teachers and donated their salaries back to the schools to keep them afloat. Local parish communities donated food from their own farms and gardens, provided transportation when needed, and paid lodging expenses for the sisters. In many of our small towns, convents were built close to the church and parish school, funded by devout parishioners committed to providing a Catholic education for their children. Our present Board Office in Dublin was once a Continuation School and residence for the Ursuline Sisters.



Sister Marion Normandin, Sister Florence Kelly and Sister Simone Myers seated on the front steps of the former Ursuline Convent before it closed in June of 1975.

Almost in defiance of government legislation and placing their trust in the fact that somehow God would provide, the determined and dedicated Sisters took charge

of many elementary schools and were instrumental in the beginning of Catholic secondary schools. Religious orders opened a window of opportunity by providing students the chance to study at the Grade 9 and 10 levels in the common school. This was used as a lever, and by the early 1900's Catholic boards across the province were providing curriculum from Kindergarten to Grade 10, and in a few unique situations, to the end of Grade 13.

The Sisters that served these schools set very high standards for themselves, their students, and the lay teachers with whom they worked. It was a 'no-nonsense' approach to this business of education. With great dignity and determination, the Sisters remained true to the rules of their religious communities while carrying out provincial and local board educational policies.

“For those of us that were fortunate to work directly with the teaching Sisters, we found them to be friends, mentors, colleagues and leaders. They provided us with a solid foundation that enabled a fledgling school board to become what it was called to become. We owe them a debt...a debt we must repay by not forgetting our past and by continuing to honour their legacy, a legacy of evangelizing and forming holy men and women who make God known, loved, and served in Huron-Perth Counties and in the greater global community.”

~ Jim McDade

Many of our school principals were Sisters and it would be quite normal for some schools in our area to have two or three teaching Sisters. Often the schools had two staff rooms, one for the Sisters and one for the lay teachers. It was not until the 1960's, following Vatican II, that community rules for the Sisters were relaxed allowing them to adapt worldly customs and be part of the

same salary schedules as their lay counterparts. At this time, there began a decline in the number of women choosing to join religious orders. Enrolment in schools was growing, new schools were needed and lay teachers were steadily filling all teaching positions. There are thousands of men and women across Ontario who can think back with a feeling of nostalgia to the days they spent as pupils of that dedicated group of ladies in long black habits, white capes, flowing veils and the gentle rattle of their rosaries.

Sisters of St. Joseph (1873-1998)

| <u>School Served</u> | <u>Years</u> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| St. Joseph's-St. Mary's, Goderich | 1873-1986 |
| St. Joseph's, Kingsbridge | 1911-1937 |
| Holy Name, St. Marys | 1913-1984 |
| St. James, Seaforth | 1913-1983 |
| St. Patrick's, Kinkora | 1916-1973 |
| St. Boniface, Zurich | 1963-1998 |

November 4, 1873, four Sisters from the Community of St. Joseph in London arrived to take up residence in Goderich. This was the first convent founded by the order in the Diocese of London outside the Cathedral City. The convent was attached to a two-room school. Initially, they were to educate only young girls but within months both boys and girls attended classes. The school was named St. Peter's, as it was adjacent to the original St. Peter's Church.

The chart above identifies the dates other convents were established by the St. Joseph Sisters in Huron County and their arrival in Perth County at St. Marys and Kinkora in 1913 and 1916 respectively. Records show that Father Hussey, Pastor at Kinkora in 1915, requested the Sisters to come and look at a building that might be remodeled and made suitable for a convent. Sister Celestine McCarthy found the building most undesirable however and seeing a field adjacent to the church property where a lot

could be procured, undertook with the help of her companion Sister Philomene, to quietly plant a statue of St. Joseph in the desired field entrusting St. Joseph to look after the best interests of the community. The land was purchased and a three storey red brick house was built as a convent. It still stands today next to St. Patrick's Church and Sister Celestine no doubt smiled all the way back to London thanking St. Joseph for interceding.



Sister Inez Whaling of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

Loretto Sisters (1878-1973)

| <u>School Served</u> | <u>Years</u> |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| St. Joseph's, Stratford | 1878-1973 |
| Immaculate Conception, Stratford | 1922 |
| St. Aloysius, Stratford | 1955-1974 |
| St. Ambrose, Stratford | 1960-1973 |
| St. Michael Senior Elementary | 1965-1967 |

The Loretto Sisters first came to Stratford in August of 1878 travelling by train from Toronto, being met in Berlin, now Kitchener, and brought to Stratford by Reverend Dr. Kilroy. For a while, they lived and taught at a few different locations but by 1879, St. Joseph's School on Grange Street was established with several additions made to the building over the years. The Sisters had an aversion to the frequent fights staged between their charges and the pupils of neighbouring Romeo Public School but it is

suspected that deep down they were pleased when the St. Joseph boys won. The renowned Loretto Academy on Waterloo Street was established by the Loretto Sisters and educated young women from the area, other parts of Canada and Latin America.



Mother Chabanel on steps of Academy with two young women students.

A new parish convent was built for the Sisters on Huron Street beside St. Joseph's Church during the pastorship of Father Joseph O'Rourke (1956-1968). They continued going out from here to teach at St. Michael's, St. Ambrose and St. Aloysius until with regret the Stratford foundation closed in 1973 ending their 95 years of service to Stratford and area.

Ursuline Sisters (1915-1974)

| <u>School Served</u> | <u>Years</u> |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Dublin Continuation School | 1915-1969 |
| St. Patrick's, Dublin | 1915-1978 |
| St. Columban | 1925-1974 |
| Our Lady of Mount Carmel | 1924-1980 |
| Immaculate Conception, Stratford | 1923-1974 |
| École Ste. Marie | 1960-1970 |
| St. Michael's Senior Elementary | 1978-1983 |
| St. Michael Catholic Secondary | 1986-1988 |

The Ursuline Sisters came to this area in 1915 to live in the very building that today

houses the offices of the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board in the village of Dublin. Father Noonan had engaged four Sisters, two to be employed in the newly built high school, and two to teach across the street at the elementary school. The Sisters left their Motherhouse in Chatham on New Year's Day of 1915 traveling by train through one of the worst snowstorms of the season. They were met at the Dublin station, loaded onto a bobsleigh, and covered with straw and buffalo robes for the ride to their new home. One can only wonder what thoughts must have gone through their heads. Had they come to some northern wilderness? In 1925, Sisters from the Dublin convent took over teaching duties at the St. Columban School, just a few miles west. Around this same time, Ursuline communities were established in Mount Carmel and in the City of Stratford.

In 2006, the Board hosted an appreciation celebration for the Religious Orders that had served our district. We were proud to greet thirty-five retired, former teachers at a luncheon held at the Board Office. Although Ursuline, St. Joseph or Loretto Religious Sisters are not teaching in

our schools, their imprints of faith and teaching remain. Hundreds of religious vocations were fostered in Huron and Perth Counties in areas where the Religious Sisters had established communities. Our very existence today as a Catholic School Board had its roots strongly formed by their selfless dedication. Yes, **they came**, not always under ideal conditions, **they served** with pride, dignity, fortitude and **they departed** quietly, entrusting the future to our hands.



Ursuline Sisters with Board Trustees, Bernard Murray, Ronald Marcy and Mike Miller. Irene Meloche, Patricia McLean, Anne McGregor, Mary Horne, Anne Bezaire, Ruth Marie Curry, Audrey Dumouchelle, Viola Feeney and Phyllis Wright.

THE HURON-PERTH COUNTY ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD: 1969 TO PRESENT

January 1, 1969 marked the amalgamation of 15 Roman Catholic School Boards in Huron-Perth. The Huron-Perth County Roman Catholic Separate School Board consisted of 19 schools at the time of its formation. Vincent Young from Goderich served as Chairman during the initial year of operation with Keith A. Culliton from Stratford taking on the responsibility in year two. Chair Culliton, in the 1969 Board Report made the following comments:

“The Board accepted the challenge of providing equal educational opportunity for

all pupils in its charge. Since a larger school system is able to offer more educational opportunities than the former smaller school units, the Board has been able to reach many of its goals through numerous meetings, careful planning, engagement of highly qualified administrative staff, and the attraction and retention of many competent teachers.”

The first Director of the new Board was John Vintar.



He clearly articulated on of the goals of the school system:

“Sight has not been lost on the necessity of inculcating in our students respect and concern for others as well as the creation of religious attitudes which will provide courage and meaning in their lives. The school community can only achieve these goals through the close cooperation of home, school, and Church.”

The Board of Trustees for 1969-1970 consisted of the following people:



*Back row from left: Christopher W. Walraven, John A. McCann, Francis E. Hicknell, Michael T. Connolly, Oscar J. Kieffer, Patrick J. Carty, Treffley (Ted) Geoffrey
Front row: Howard H. Shantz (Vice-Chair), Arthur E. Haid, Joseph E. Looby, Keith A. Culliton (Chair), James J. Morris, Vincent L. Young, William J. Innes*

The following hardworking individuals made up the administration team:



Left to right: Edward J. Rowland, John Vintar, Joseph Tokar, Jack J. Lane

The total budget for the 1969-1970 school year was \$1,826,786.

This was a very busy time for the new Board and administration team. There was a great deal of activity in the area of policy and procedure development. New programs and system directives were the order of the day.

In 1971, the Huron-Perth County Roman Catholic Separate School Board negotiated an agreement with the Huron County Board of Education to share transportation. So began a long tradition that still exists today of integrated transportation. This resulted in our buses traveling down the roads picking up both Catholic and public students at the secondary and elementary levels.

With the amalgamation, Special Education services were introduced. E.F. Rooney was the first special education services consultant. Within 3 years, taking us to 1972, the personnel of the Special Education Services branch grew from one to nine due to the increasing number of students found to have learning disabilities.

The Mission statement of the Huron-Perth C.R.C.S.S. Board spoke of the inclusion of all our learners and stakeholders within our programs, services and operations and providing learning opportunities that nurture each individual’s gifts, self-worth, potential and independence.

In 1980, Bill 82 amended the Education Act to say that “all children with

disabilities are entitled to attend publicly funded schools in Ontario”.

Connie Birmingham, Coordinator of Student Services during the implementation years, explained the approach. *“From the outset, our goal was to build a program around the child rather than make the child fit into a program. We would ask the parents to tell us about their child’s strengths and needs and where they hoped their child would be in the future. We had an advantage in our faith-based system, to be able to assure anxious parents that we welcomed their child with special needs as a gift of God and looked forward to working with them to achieve their dreams for their child.”*

On October 1, 1973, the teachers of Huron-Perth participated in their first full system professional development day. One of the themes for the day was The Three R’s – Reading, Religion and Report Cards.

On November 5, 1975 the Board Office moved from Seaforth to its present day site in Dublin. The establishment of the new offices in the former Dublin high school represented a continuing saga in the historical development of the building. It was originally built and opened in early 1915 as a convent and continuation school. In the 60 years that the Ursuline Sisters were here, generations of the area residents were taught in this building. In the renovations that had to be made, great care was taken to keep the building in its natural state, especially the fine woodwork which highlights the interior. No major structural changes were necessary. The final result is certainly a tribute to the historical character of this outstanding complex. The Chair of the Board, Mr. David Teahen, welcomed the assembly and Bishop Sherlock dedicated the building.

At the 1976 inaugural Board meeting, Chair Arthur Haid encouraged parents to visit schools. Mr. Haid commented that communication at the classroom level is most important since it is the closest to the

concerns of parents. Furthermore, it was his hope that our schools would continue to encourage parental visitation to the various school and classroom events which take place throughout the year and would avail themselves of the opportunity to visit the schools and classes. Thus, parents and ratepayers would have an opportunity to know what happens in our schools.

Mr. William Eckert became Director of Education in 1976 to replace John Vintar who retired. His opening comments to the Board of Trustees included the following, *“I am accepting the position of Director on your approval with a view to improving instruction in the Catholic schools of Huron and Perth counties. I expect to apply all of my knowledge, skills, organizational ability and experience to this end, especially emphasizing the further clarification of school objectives, child-centred learning and a further refinement of core skills and attitudes for the various subject areas.”*

A new service was introduced to teachers in September, 1978. Two evenings a week, a new Resource Centre at the Board Office was open for teachers to explore new teaching and learning materials. The Resource Centre, under the management of Edith McCarroll, Teacher Librarian, also loaned out videotapes, filmstrips and slides to the schools. At this time a van was purchased to transport media resources and mail between the Board Office and schools. Willa Van DenBerk was the first courier driver.

The year 1981 saw the first microcomputer introduced to St. Joseph’s School in Stratford. The computer was placed there on a trial basis to determine the teaching potential of this technology. Within two years every school in the system had a Commodore Pet 4016 microcomputer. These computers were very popular and in fact, staff at St. Joseph’s School in Clinton complained that the students did not want to go home in the evening but would rather stay late and

work on the Pet. Many of the programs were drill and practice programs that dealt with language and mathematics. In the 1983 school system annual report, Director Eckert predicted the future in regards to technology use in schools:

“We are at the onset of a major revolution in education, a revolution matching the invention of the printing press. By the year 2000, the major way of learning at all levels and in almost all subject areas will probably be through the interactive use of computers.”

This was obviously an exciting time in our schools and was indeed the start of something special. Over the next two years the Board spent in excess of \$350,000 on microcomputers.

French Immersion in Huron-Perth began in September, 1985. The Huron-Perth C.R.C.S.S. Board gave the green light to the implementation of the Total Early French Immersion program. The Board began offering Total Early French Immersion classes, Kindergarten through Grade 2 at St. Mary’s School, Goderich and St. Michael’s School, Stratford.

Gaetan Blanchette, formerly the principal of St. Boniface School, Zurich and prior to that, itinerant Core French teacher at many schools in the system, was appointed to the position of Superintendent of Education in 1985. His primary responsibility was the implementation of the French Immersion program. Mr. Blanchette was well qualified for his new position. He was educated in a French, first language school from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

In 1985, the Huron-Perth Board still operated 19 elementary schools providing a Catholic education to the 2,600 students in its care. Fourteen trustees sat on the Board representing Catholic school ratepayers from the 51 municipalities in Huron-Perth and bordering townships. The Board met every second and fourth Monday of the month to

set policies and tend to the financial and educational needs of schools. Mr. Ronald Marcy of Stratford was the Chairman.

Total Board expenditure for the year 1984 was \$9,118,000. Of this total, \$1,120,563 was spent for much needed improvements and additions to schools in Wingham, Clinton and Exeter. These improvements included added space for physical education, library services, special education and regular classrooms.

Bill Eckert stated, *“It is important that we all maintain a historical perspective and be ever appreciative of the sacrifices made by so many in the past, in the cause of Catholic Education.”*

Statistics September 30, 1985

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| Number of Students | 2,685 |
| Number of Teachers | 162 |
| Number of Teachers (F.T.E.) | 140.5 |
| Summer School Enrolment | 178 |
| Night School Gr. 9 Rel. Ed. Enrolment | 100 |
| Number of School Buildings | 19 |
| Number of Classrooms | 119 |
| Number of Portables | 9 |

In 1984, Premier W. Davis announced that there would be extended funding to Grades 11, 12 and 13 in Ontario’s Catholic Schools. Within three years, Catholic schools finally enjoyed funding from JK to the end of Grade 13. This was an exciting time for Catholic secondary schools as funds started to flow for new facilities.

Prior to the 1984 government announcement, Catholic secondary education in Huron and Perth counties was only available in Stratford and Dublin up until the mid 1960’s. This program was made possible by the Loretto Sisters in Stratford at the Loretto Academy and by the Ursulines at the Dublin Continuation School.

The 1985-1986 school year marked the final year for École Ste. Marie due to a steady decline in student enrolment. Grades

1, 7 and 8 had already moved to St. Boniface in Zurich for that school year and the remaining grades would join them in September 1986.

In the mid 1980's, the Board decided to begin establishing secondary schools in the two counties. At that time the Catholic population in the two counties was not large, composing about 15-20% of the total, and was not concentrated in any one area. According to Board estimates, the potential pool of Roman Catholic secondary students in both counties totaled approximately one thousand students. The challenge for the Board was to decide where to best place a secondary school in each county in order to serve the greater number. Stratford was seen to be the obvious choice in Perth, and although Goderich is the largest town in Huron, Clinton was more central.

The Board decided to proceed after collecting data on student interest, to offer Grade 9 at the original St. Michael's beginning in the fall of 1986. Mr. John McCauley, Superintendent of Education, said that although St. Michael had a capacity of 310, more space would be needed by 1990. He was optimistic that the school would continue to grow when the course calendar demonstrated its quality and success. The school was to begin with a full program in the academic subjects and the arts as well as a number of commercial subjects. It was decided that technical programs would be made available through a purchase of services agreement with the public board.

The opening of St. Michael Catholic Secondary School in Stratford would bring to fruition the hopes and dreams of many of our Catholic partners.

Mr. Daniel Bishop was the first principal and promised to make St. Michael a different high school. Mr. Bishop was quoted in the December Board report. *"Let me emphasize that our efforts will be to make St. Michael a different high school - one that*

strives for excellence in all areas. We will do this by offering student-centred education where each student is recognized as unique and inherently worthy of respect. We will do this by creating a 'Spirit'."

He also reminded us of the importance of keeping our faith and the reason for existence in the forefront. *"The pursuit of academic excellence is a given. The striving for athletic supremacy is expected. But...Our mission is the teaching and preaching and the living of the Catholic faith in the Roman Catholic tradition."*

These indeed were truly exciting times for the Catholic families in Perth County.

The Board decided to take a much more cautious approach to secondary school education in Huron County. The population of Catholic students was widely dispersed and the Board did not have a suitable building to begin this endeavor. One of the ideas that was seriously considered was the sharing of space with the Huron County Board of Education. Central Huron Secondary School in Clinton had an entire wing of the school that was unused. The Huron County Board was quite receptive to the sharing and noted the advantages of having larger numbers of pupils for certain programs and of being able to establish shorter and more efficient bus routes.

Mr. Bill Eckert, Mr. John McCauley and members of the liaison committee made many presentations about this proposal throughout Huron County. Over 800 parents participated in these information sessions. A survey at that time indicated that approximately 44 students would enroll in a Catholic school if one was established. This was well below what the committee felt was necessary for the establishment of a secondary school. A survey in Huron County also indicated that there was little support and some confusion about the school within a school structure at Central Huron. The Board

at that time decided to study over the next two years other shared secondary school facility arrangements both in and out of Ontario.

The year 1986 was an important year for Catholic ratepayers. The passing of Bill 30, which was an amendment to the Education Act extended the rights of Separate school supporters to pay their education taxes to the Separate school board from Kindergarten through Grade 13. Prior to this Bill all taxes for secondary age students went directly to the public school system. At this point if you had been paying your Separate school education taxes at the elementary level your taxes would be automatically directed to the Separate School Board for secondary school purposes.

In June, 1988, Immaculate Conception School in Stratford closed its doors. The students were transferred to the newly enlarged St. Ambrose School. It is interesting to note that of the 114 teachers who had served the school over the years exactly half, (57) were Ursuline Sisters. A party was held with many staff returning to recognize and celebrate the school's service to the Stratford community.

On November 29, 1988, the City of Stratford announced plans for a 27.5 million dollar education and recreation centre - 8.5 million of this would allow for the building of a new Catholic Secondary School. It was projected to begin construction in the fall of 1990. At the time of this announcement, approximately 37% of the students of St. Michael's were housed in portables and this was rising each year. This was great news for our secondary school students who were in desperate need of a new facility.

In 1989, the Board celebrated with their 3,500 students, 20 years of Catholic education under the county system leadership. The 1990's began with the appointment of Dr. James Brown as Director. He immediately led the Board through the

process of establishing a new Statement of Direction which read as follows:

The Huron-Perth County Roman Catholic Separate School Board believes learners in a changing world must be:

- *Witnesses to the truths and values of the Catholic faith*
- *Responsible citizens in a global community*
- *Informed decision-makers*
- *Confident problem-solvers*
- *Competent communicators*
- *Self-motivated, life-long learners*
- *Capable users of technology*
- *Appreciative of the arts*
- *Responsible for living a healthy lifestyle*
- *Cooperative and collaborative participants*

In 1991, the Board introduced a two year Kindergarten program. The continuous two year program addressed the developmental needs of 4 and 5 year old children. The program philosophy, which was based on sound research and practice, was that children in junior and senior Kindergarten learned by stages, not ages. At the end of the year, parents were surveyed and 96% of them commented that their child had adapted well to the two year Kindergarten program.

The next few years were busy ones for the Board as Trustees planned the construction of their new secondary school in Clinton. The dream of Catholic secondary education for Huron County was about to become a reality. Construction began in October of 1994 for a facility to initially accommodate 300 students. On November 5, 1995, Bishop John Michael Sherlock was the Celebrant at the official grand opening of St. Anne's. There were 132 students and 16 staff under the leadership of the first principal, Mr. Ray Contois.

The fall of 1996 was the first time that all of our schools had access to the worldwide internet. This proved to be the beginning of a rich resource provided to our students assisting them to become self-directed, well-informed learners. Coincidentally, this also marked the time in which our gifted program for advanced learners began in the Board.

The Board was highly committed to parent involvement in its schools and in the early 1990's developed a pilot project in a few schools implementing school councils. This successful pilot resulted in the Board developing a system wide policy. Roles and responsibilities for council members were clearly laid out and many of the parent teacher organizations that had previously operated in the schools were converted to school councils.

An Education Improvement Commission review team from the Ministry of Education visited the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board on May 25 and 26, 1999 to conduct interviews with a wide range of board representatives including trustees, senior administration, principals and vice-principals, union and non-union employee groups, students, school councils and community members. The process of having an outside agency seek the opinion of so many to determine how the Huron-Perth Catholic system operated, although time consuming, was quite beneficial.

The Education Improvement Commission Review Team provided the following progress highlights: *"Our review team commends the board administrators and trustees of Huron-Perth Catholic for their great efforts to maintain open communications, trust and goodwill with their communities and employees. Trustees and employees throughout the Board are dedicated to working together to give students in their area a quality, Catholic education. They are succeeding and we congratulate them."*

Chair, Bernard Murray, reminded the system about its role in helping the less fortunate: *"I believe it is important to provide training in the area of social justice to instill an understanding that the marginalized must receive a greater share of the wealth in the world. The goal of the Catholic educator must be to educate the child to transform the world. The opportunity to provide a solid training in our Catholic beliefs is of paramount importance. The transmission of the faith values is the responsibility of everyone throughout the system by word and action."*

The 1999-2000 school year marked the first year of the implementation of the new Ontario Curriculum. The program was significantly different from the Ontario Schools Intermediate & Senior Divisions program that it replaced. Teachers had been actively preparing to make the transition as smooth as possible for students.

Students who entered Grade 9 in September 1999 had different graduate requirements than previous students, including more compulsory and fewer optional credits. Students in our system were studying Mathematics, Science, English, Religion, Geography, French and two of the Arts, Physical Education or Technology. They must also have completed 40 hours of community service. The program required that they pass the Provincial Grade 10 Test of Reading and Writing.

As partners in their children's education, parents were involved in the implementation process. Presentations were made in the elementary schools to the parents of Grade 8 students to familiarize them with the new program and to help them advise their children in their course selections. There was ongoing support in the secondary schools as parents were invited to Parent Information Nights. The school council also offered valuable input to the process.

The Board was very active in the Catholic Curriculum Cooperative which included 17 Catholic School Boards in the geographical area from Peterborough to Windsor. The role of the Cooperative was to develop curriculum for Catholic schools throughout the region. Membership in the Cooperative not only allowed the Board to avail themselves to excellent curriculum materials at a low financial cost, but also provided opportunities for our teachers to play a very active role in developing curriculum materials for Catholic schools throughout the province.

In its wisdom, the Board established an elementary music program in the spring of 2000. This involved the hiring of five teachers at a cost of \$308,050. The program was very well received by schools and continues to enhance student learning within our Board.

The year 2001 brought expansion to the broad based technology programs at both St. Anne's and St. Michael. These courses were becoming very popular at both sites and there was a great deal of interest being generated around youth apprenticeships.

After 30 years of dedicated service to the Board, Director of Education, Gaetan Blanchette retired. He was succeeded by Larry Langan, an external candidate from the London Catholic Board. Mr. Ray Contois who was the Superintendent of Education also retired and was followed by Martha Dutrizac.

In early 2003, the Board embarked on an ambitious strategic planning process with its stakeholders. This intensive process resulted in a new Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles for the Board. They also developed a very comprehensive strategic plan or roadmap for the future.

Faith and Learning...Celebrating the Journey

Board Mission Statement

We are a Catholic School Board. We serve our students, working with the home, parish and school community to:

- Nurture a Christ-centred environment;
- Provide student-focused learning opportunities;
- Support the growth of the whole person.

These were very exciting times with major changes occurring on a number of fronts. The entire elementary school library system was revamped with the Board expending over a million dollars on books, renovations and staffing. This period also marked the establishment of a system Catholic Education Team. This team was responsible for planning system events, organizing faith development opportunities and advising the Board on matters related to enhancing our faith throughout the system. The group established the roles of the religion advisory teacher in each school, forged a partnership with King's College of the University of Western Ontario and created the Mother Teresa Faith in Action Award. The Board was also chosen as the lead board in the region to develop and organize Ministry of Education training opportunities for 17 boards. This work was greatly appreciated by the boards in our area.

In 2002/2003, the Board approved the construction of two new replacement schools. St. Joseph's, Clinton was moved to a site on the existing St. Anne's Catholic Secondary school property. The Board also approved relocations of St. Mary's Catholic School from Hesson to Listowel where the Board had purchased a beautiful piece of property on the outskirts of the town.

Our students continue to demonstrate excellent results and improvement in the annual EQAO results placing the Board near the top in the province.

At the secondary level, an Alternative Education Program was established off site in Stratford and new "Save a Credit" program was initiated to help students who may have been struggling. This year also marked the first year in which school staffs held Faith Developments Days. The administration has also invested heavily in the music programs at both secondary schools resulting in the establishment of concert bands at each school.



In June 2006, St. Joseph's, Kingsbridge was closed due to steady declining enrolment. This was a sad day for this community who had enjoyed 150 years of Catholic education. The students of this school were transferred to St. Joseph's in Clinton.

On the construction front, major additions were put on to St. Joseph's, Stratford, St. Mary's, Goderich, Sacred Heart, Wingham, and a state-of-the-art track facility installed at St. Anne's. Renovations were completed at St. Aloysius in Stratford and at St. Michael which includes six classrooms, an addition to the technology wing, a new gymnasium and fitness centre. The Board continues to be financially stable and balanced their budgets successfully during this period.



Throughout 2006, the Board continued to be an innovative school system and leading the province on many academic fronts. The strategic plan was reviewed and expanded and new initiatives such as Best Start programming, Quality Daily Physical Education, System Safe and Healthy Schools committee and new Secondary High Skills Majors programs in our secondary schools have been established. Our Student Success initiative at the secondary school is well underway under the direction of Superintendent, Dan Parr.

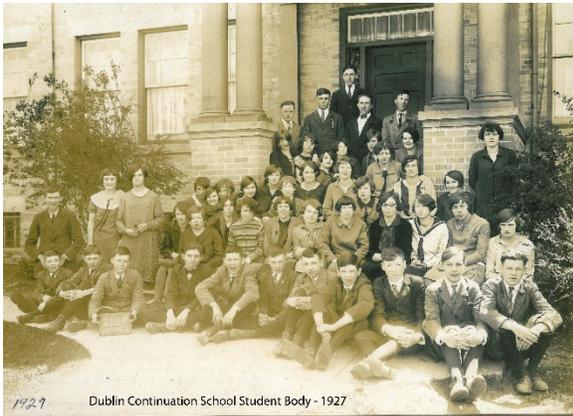
Today the Board continues to have a healthy financial outlook. We are planning for changing demographics which will result in steady declining enrolment over the next ten years. We have a positive and dedicated workforce who always keep the best interest of the children in the forefront of their minds. Our trustees are focused on the improvement of student learning and are very proud of their school system. We are blessed to have an excellent school system.



Dublin Continuation School
The School That We Call Our Own



Dublin Continuation School and Convent. Photo taken around 1925.



1927 Dublin Continuation School Student Body - 1927



D.C.S. (DUBLIN CONTINUATION SCHOOL) BAND



DCS Retreat 1949



1975
D.E. Teahen
A.E. Hald
Chairperson
Vice-Chairperson
1976
A.E. Hald
T. Geoffroy
Back (left to right)
D.E. Teahen, H.H. Shantz, J.E. Looby, R.K. Marcy, M.T. Connolly, G. Fleming, F.E. Hicknell, W.J. Kinahan
Front (left to right)
D. Crowley, V.L. Young, T. Geoffroy, A.E. Hald, J. O'Drowsky, F.J. Verg



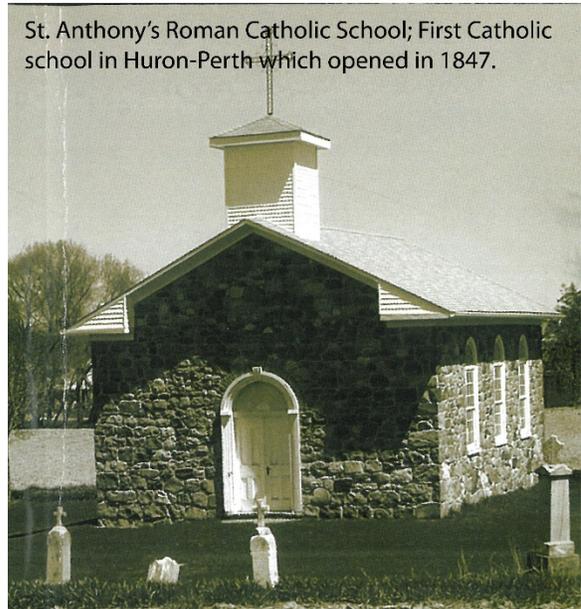
Classroom Choir Practice



Board Office Staff - 1993



Mother Yvonne with her class.



St. Anthony's Roman Catholic School; First Catholic school in Huron-Perth which opened in 1847.

