

## **Catholicism in the Hamilton Area before the Establishment of the Diocese in 1856**

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A convenient though admittedly arbitrary date with which to begin the prediocesan history of Hamilton is 1850. On May 20th of that year the Right Reverend Armand Francis Mary, Comte de Charbonnel, became the second bishop of Toronto in Canada West (Upper Canada). Bishop de Charbonnel succeeded the Right Reverend Michael Power, who had been elevated to episcopal rank when the diocese of Toronto was formed in 1841. Under the guidance of de Charbonnel, a self-effacing but indefatigable French aristocrat thrust unwillingly into a newly-established see in the centre of the Canadian wilderness, the immediate foundations of Hamilton diocese were laid.

The diocese of Toronto, even though but a portion of the original diocese of Kingston, was vast in area by any standards. It extended roughly from Oshawa to Sandwich (Windsor) east and west, and from Goderich to Port Colborne north and south, including as well the missions of Lakes Huron and Superior. Its second bishop, immediately on taking office it seems, saw the necessity of a further division of episcopal jurisdiction if Catholicism was to prosper in this pioneer country. Almost from the beginning of his tenure, de Charbonnel sought assistance for the many problems he faced. At first this desire took the form of a request for a coadjutor bishop, whom de Charbonnel wished to install in Hamilton.<sup>1</sup> But the man he chose for this role, the Reverend Patrick Dowd, of the Suplician Seminary in Montreal, refused the position, despite de Charbonnel's efforts and two supporting letters from Rome.<sup>2</sup> De Charbonnel also tried unsuccessfully to encourage the Oblates of Mary Immaculate to send several priests from Montreal to aid him, offering them Hamilton as a location for a house which could serve as a recruiting centre for their community.<sup>3</sup> He then decided on the alternative of reducing the size of his own diocese by the establishment of additional sees in Canada

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<sup>1</sup> At this time Hamilton was a rapidly-growing lakeport town with a population of about 14,000 persons, according to the Dominion Census Report of 1851.

<sup>2</sup> See Francis J. Boland, C.S.B., *An Analysis of the Problems and Difficulties of the Basilian Fathers in Toronto, 1850-1860*, unpublished Ottawa University Ph.D. Dissertation, p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> See Candide Causse, O.M.C., *Evêque d'or, Croisade de foi, Vie de Monseigneur de Charbonnel, Evêque de Toronto*, p. 73.

West. To this end he was successful in having the Second Provincial Council of Quebec, May 28 June 4, 1854, resolve to form the two new dioceses of Hamilton and London. The Holy See acceded to the resolution, and issued Bulls in 1856, establishing the new sees, and appointing Bishops to them.

Formation of the new dioceses, de Charbonnel hoped, would mean an increase in the number of clergy in Upper Canada. This was the prime need if Catholicism was to be maintained and to develop in the region. More clergy were desperately wanted to tend the spiritual well-being of the Catholic population scattered through a vast and sparsely-settled area, and to take the initiative in the growing struggle for the establishment and maintenance of an adequate system of Catholic education. A graphic illustration of de Charbonnel's lack of clergy is found in a Galt subscriber's letter to the Toronto *Mirror* in 1855:

Dear Mirror: it is three years since we purchased a lot in Galt for a church site, and it was some six months after that time before we paid as much as £15 on it, but the winter following His Lordship, the Bishop of Toronto, happened to come to Preston, and we had an interview with His Lordship, as to how we were situated in Galt, respecting our lot, and he promised us he would send us an Irish Priest for a week or two, and so His Lordship made good his promise, sent us the Rev. Mr. McNulty, and before his departure from us we had paid for our Church lot with the exception of a few pounds. Now, Sir, we have it all paid for and hold our bond, and still it stands so, we have neither a Church nor a School House, though there are over sixty Catholic scholars in Galt of school age, that is from 5 to 15 years; and, dear Mirror, we are able enough if we were only willing – there are Churches rising up in every village around us – and we have none; but all we want is the influence of a Priest. Hoping in God His Lordship may come to see this and take some interest in Galt, as we are worse off for a Priest than those who are in the wild bush. I have no doubt if the Rev. Mr. McNulty had been among us for a few weeks, but we would have a School House... I will conclude by hoping that His Lordship will take pity on the poor Catholics of Galt – and do something for their benefit – as a man must go to Guelph for a Priest in case of need... Galt, 22 Oct., 1855.<sup>4</sup>

The Rev. John Holzer, S.J., missionary stationed in Guelph at the time expressed regret, perhaps even a little annoyance, at this published letter:

...the Bishop of Toronto did not forget the Catholics of Galt, and indeed, all the priests of this Diocese know that their well-beloved Bishop and Chief Pastor feels intensely and understands thoroughly, all the spiritual wants of his people; that he wrote to 18 Bishops of Christendom at one time, asking as it were with suppliant knees, for more co-laborers, and that

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<sup>4</sup> *The Mirror*, Oct. 26, 1855.

recently, at St. John's, Newfoundland, he, in the presence of so many illustrious prelates, declared that he loves his flock and is prepared to lay down his life, if necessary. With such facts, is it not painful for us to hear our Bishop admonished to take some interest in the people of Galt ... ?<sup>5</sup>

The *Mirror's* editorial comment on Fr. Holzer's letter puts the emphasis squarely on the difficulty:

The fact is, as we have before stated, we want, at least, twenty or thirty more priests, but where they are to come from we cannot tell. His Lordship has done and is doing all in his power to procure them, and we see no remedy for the present, but to wait until they come from St. Michael's College.<sup>6</sup>

The uncertainty and weakness of Catholic Separate Schools in Upper Canada at this time is underlined by de Charbonnel's remarks in a circular letter of July, 1856:

Catholic Separate Schools are next to impossible in Upper Canada, since there are none as yet in Hamilton<sup>7</sup>, London, St. Catherine's and Dundas. And those of Brantford, Adjala and Guelph have been contested, and those of Toronto and other places exist, but with the greatest difficulty and at the cost of great sacrifices, and consequently Mixed Schools remain *a moral infanticide in permanence* for most of our dear Children, and their Children's Children.<sup>8</sup>

The hopes for benefits from the new dioceses are well expressed in the *Mirror's* editorial announcement of their establishment:

It is with much pleasure we announce that the Sovereign Pontiff has acceded to the solicitations of the Canadian Hierarchy and erected two new bishoprics in Upper Canada, those of London and Hamilton. It is a special favor granted by the See of Rome, and one which, increasing as it undoubtedly will, the number of priests, schools, and religious institutions in this country, will be productive of the most beneficial results, and cannot fail to call forth from a people proverbially attached to the Holy See the strongest expressions of joy and approbation ...<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *The Mirror*, Nov. 2, 1855.

<sup>6</sup> *The Mirror*, Nov. 2, 1855.

<sup>7</sup> There were two Catholic Separate Schools in Hamilton at this time; see *infra*, Note 12.

<sup>8</sup> "Circular of the Bishop of Toronto on the School Question," signed by de Charbonnel, Visitation Day, 1856, *Toronto Separate School Board Papers*. Cf. Franklin A. Walker, *Catholic Education and Politics in Upper Canada*, pp. 201-2; *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> *The Mirror*, May 2, 1856.

The Diocese of Hamilton, with its episcopal seat in the city of Hamilton itself, was formally established by a Papal Bull dated in Rome, Feb. 29, 1856. Its territorial limits comprised the counties of Brant, Bruce, Grey, Haldimand, Halton, Waterloo, Wellington and Wentworth, Manitoulin Island, Sault Ste. Marie and the missions of Lake Superior, to the limits of the Diocese of Bytown (Ottawa) and the Diocese of St. Boniface in the Northwest territories.<sup>10</sup> Within this area there was a Catholic population of approximately 28,000, including 3,000 Indians in the northern missions. The major centres of population were: Hamilton, with 15,500 persons, of whom 4,000 were Catholics; Dundas, with 4,000, of whom 1,300 were Catholics; Brantford, with 3,000, among them 750 Catholics; Guelph, with about 650 Catholics in a population of 3,000; Galt, with about 200 Catholics in a population of 2,000; Paris, with 1,900, of whom 300 were Catholics; Preston, with a population of 1,200, of whom 200 were Catholics. In addition there were about 150 Catholics scattered through Bruce County, 4,500 in Wellington County and about 1,000 in Grey.<sup>11</sup> The Second Council of Quebec noted that one mission in the proposed new diocese, Guelph, had only two priests ministering to more than 15,000 souls.

Early in 1856 there were just six resident priests in the area : Rev. John O'Reilly in Dundas; Very Rev. Edward Gordon, V.G., and Rev. Augustine Carayon in Hamilton; Rev. Jeremiah Ryan in Brantford; Rev. Columban Messner, O.C., in St. Clement's; Rev. Rupert Ebner, S.J., in Wilmot (St. Agatha); and two Jesuit missionaries stationed at Guelph, Rev. John Holzer, S.J., and Rev. Caspar Matoga, S.J., the latter of whom was incapacitated – in all four diocesan priests and four regular clergy to serve the whole diocese. Existing records show that there were eight Catholic Separate Schools in the diocese: two in Arthur, one in Brantford, one in Guelph, one in Paris, one in Wilmot, one in Nichol and one in Wellesley;<sup>12</sup> one convent, that of the

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<sup>10</sup> Papal Bull, *Farrell Papers, Diocese of Hamilton Archives*.

<sup>11</sup> These figures are taken from the Dominion Census Reports of 1851 and 1853: *The Canada Directory and A Supplement to the Canada Directory, 1853*.

<sup>12</sup> The Annual Report of the Chief Superintendent of Education in Canada West for the year 1856 lists these localities and the dates of school establishments as follows: Arthur # 1-1854; Arthur # 2-1854; Brantford-1853; Guelph-1843; Paris-1856; Wilmot-1844; Nichol-1853; Wellesley-1854.

Construction of two separate schools in Hamilton was begun in 1855, according to a Hamilton correspondent to the Toronto *Mirror* on Dec. 21, 1855. These schools, however, were not officially opened until the fall of 1856. It is also interesting to note that Fr. Wiriath's census report of 1837 (cf. *infra*, p. ) mentions two Catholic schools in the German Catholic settlements of Waterloo County: one at Wilmot, probably the same one which began to receive government grants in 1844; and another at New Germany (Maryhill).

Sisters of St. Joseph in Hamilton,<sup>13</sup> and an orphanage operated by these Sisters also in Hamilton.<sup>14</sup>

A personal account, perhaps a bit more rhetorical than historical, of the pioneer conditions found in the diocese of Hamilton is provided in Bishop (later Archbishop) McEvay's diocesan jubilee sermon preached in St. Mary's Cathedral, Hamilton, May 20, 1906:

To sketch the history of each parish would lead me far beyond my limits. The settlements were principally Irish [*sic*] whose number was considerable, but whose scattered houses made ministration most trying. Missionaries were few in number, their territory broad, and the facilities for travelling, for serving their flock, most discouraging. Not a single railway throughout the diocese – -and only two or three high roads. The blazed trees and the narrow distant clearing were the only guides for the weary missionary in his long journey. No Churches, no schools [*sic*], no homes for priests. No homes for priests, do I say? None, my brethren, for they were rather headquarters than homes. That venerable pioneer, whose memory is still green in this Diocese, whose remains rest beneath these walls, the Very Rev. Vicar General Gordon, was one of few resident priests. He had been appointed pastor of Hamilton in Nov. 1846. This zealous missionary thus describes with characteristic modesty his shares in these toils, and the early state of religion to John Maguire, "Well, my dear sir, no doubt I had many a hard ride through the forest, and I often had to depend on my poor horse as my eyelids dozed while I sat in the saddle overpowered with fatigue and want of sleep. But no matter what labour I had to undertake, I always received my reward in the faith and love of the people and in their delight at seeing and hearing their priest – why sir, it would raise my mare's spirits. And how they kept the faith! It was surprising. For years some would not see a priest; but still the faith was there in a mother's heart, and she would teach it to her children. We have lost some, for there were sheep without shepherds; but that we did not lose more and that we saved so many in times long gone by is only to be attributed to the mercy of God, and the tenacity with which the Irish cling to their faith. Their devotion and their affection and their gratitude cheered me many a time, and made me forget fatigue and trouble of every kind. God bless them! They are a good people." ..<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Statistics given on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Diocese indicate that three convents existed in the diocese when it was established. However, I am unable to find any verification of this number. Probably one of the convents figuring in the total of three was that of the Ladies of Loretto in Guelph. But this convent was founded in June, 1856, after the Diocese was erected. I am at a loss to know the third convent in question.

<sup>14</sup> St. Mary's Orphanage in Hamilton was opened in 1851, and in 1858 was staffed by twenty-one sisters; *City of Hamilton Directory*, 1858.

<sup>15</sup> *The Catholic Register*, May 24, 1906.

The first church in what was to be the diocese of Hamilton was erected in Dundas. The exact date of its construction is unknown, although it is certain that a church existed in the town in 1828.<sup>16</sup> In its early years, Dundas was a mission attended from Niagara. Its first resident priest was Rev. John Cassidy, who is said to have arrived in 1832, the same year a new frame church was constructed.<sup>17</sup> The Rev. John O'Reilly mentioned as resident in Dundas in 1856 had been appointed to this mission on Jan. 6, 1847. Prior to his residence there Dundas had been visited by a variety of missionaries during the 1820's and early 1830's, and had a succession of resident priests from Fr. Cassidy (1832) to Fr. O'Reilly (1847).<sup>18</sup>

Father, later Dean, O'Reilly was born in County Cavan, Ireland, on March 5, 1818. He came to Canada in 1841 to visit his uncle, the Rev. Eugene O'Reilly, who was resident priest at the Toronto Gore. Remaining in Canada, O'Reilly entered the College of Chambly and later, in 1843, the Grand Seminary in Montreal, where he was a fellow-student of John Farrell, later first bishop of Hamilton. Fr. O'Reilly was ordained by Bishop Power in St. Paul's Church, Toronto, on July 5, 1846, at the age of 28. He was appointed curate of this church, but only for a few months. In November, 1846, he was transferred to Hamilton as assistant to Fr. Gordon. On Jan. 6, 1847, O'Reilly became resident priest at Dundas, serving the town and surrounding missions. He was called by Bishop Power that same year to serve among the typhoid fever-ridden Irish immigrants in Toronto. Here he took sick, and was relieved by Bishop Power himself. Power also succumbed to the fever, and the saintly bishop died one of its victims on October 1, 1847. Fr. O'Reilly recovered, and in November returned to Dundas, where he remained until his death on Nov. 14, 1867. He was appointed Dean of

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<sup>16</sup> Hugh Joseph Somers, *The Life and Times of the Honourable and Rt. Rev. Alexander Macdonell, D.D., First Bishop of Upper Canada*, p. 96.

<sup>17</sup> This information is contained in reminiscences on Catholicism in early Dundas by "Old-Timer," Frank Halley, in *The Catholic Register*, Dec. 2, 1905. Dean Harris speaks of Fr. E. Gordon as having built the *first* church in Dundas, between 1832 and 1842: Dean Harris, *The Catholic Church in the Niagara Peninsula 1626-1895*, p. 189. Obviously this statement is inaccurate as it stands, although it may be the case that Fr. Gordon was responsible for the erection of a *second* church in Dundas, prior to the residency of Fr. Cassidy.

<sup>18</sup> "Old-Timer" lists as resident priests Fr. Mills, 1840, succeeded by Frs. O'Flynn, Connelly, O'Dwyer, O'Reilly, 1846. Fr. Spetz gives the dates of residencies as follows: Rev. Dr. Robert R. Mills, in Dundas from 1840 to 1842; Rev. James O'Flynn, from May, 1842 to June, 1842; Rev. Peter Connolly [*sic*], from May 23, 1843 to Dec. 28, 1844; Rev. Patrick O'Dwyer, from March 1, 1845 to Dec. 28, 1846; Rev. John O'Reilly, from 1846 to 1847, later in Brantford as pastor, 1852-59 (this last is not accurate), again in Dundas, 1847-1867: Theobald Spetz, C.R., *The Catholic Church in Waterloo County*, p. 228.

Dundas by Bishop Crinnon.

The earliest record seen of a Catholic church in Hamilton is dated 1833. At this time there was no resident priest in the city, and Hamilton Catholics were accustomed to assist at Sunday Mass in Dundas. The source of this fact, however, does not give too edifying an account of the number involved in this weekly hegira.<sup>19</sup> The Very Rev. William Peter McDonald, Vicar General of Kingston (to Bishop Macdonell) and later of Toronto (to Bishop Power), arrived in Hamilton as the city's first resident priest in October, 1838. A learned and extremely forceful man – he is spoken of as a great controversialist – Fr. McDonald came to Canada at the request of Bishop Macdonell to head the latter's small diocesan seminary, the College of Iona at St. Raphael, Glengarry County. He arrived in Montreal on November 20, 1826, to take charge of St. Raphael's; and shortly thereafter was appointed Vicar General to Macdonell. His tenure at the seminary, however, was as shortlived as the existence of the school itself; and in 1830 he was in charge of the parish at Kingston. Here Fr. McDonald remained for four years. Here, too, in 1832, he founded *The Catholic*, the first Catholic religious weekly in Upper Canada.<sup>20</sup> Subsequent years found Fr. McDonald resident priest in various centres of the new diocese of Kingston: Toronto in 1835; Bytown (Ottawa), 1836; Prescott, 1837-8; Hamilton, 1838-46.

In Hamilton Fr. McDonald renewed his efforts at Catholic journalism interrupted in Kingston in 1833; he began again to publish *The Catholic* in 1841. In 1842, the Rt. Rev. Michael Power, newly-appointed Bishop of Toronto, named Fr. McDonald his Vicar General, and made *The Catholic* the official episcopal organ. However, the weekly continued only into 1844, when reasons of health and finance forced Fr. McDonald to discontinue publication and to offer the paper for sale. Thus ended the only attempt in Hamilton's early history to publish an expressly Catholic independent journal. The venerable Vicar General exercised his ministry in Hamilton for another two years; but in 1846 old age forced him into retirement. He resigned his position, and went to live with Bishop Power in the newly-completed St. Michael's Palace, Toronto. He died on Good Friday, April 2nd, of the following year.<sup>21</sup>

Vicar General McDonald was succeeded in Hamilton in 1846 by the Rev. Edward Gordon, later Vicar-General Gordon. The ecclesiastical career of this remarkable man in many ways typifies the transition from the early

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<sup>19</sup> "Old-Timer," the source of the tale, says that one wagon was sufficient to take all who wished to make the trip; *The Catholic Register*, Dec. 2, 1905.

<sup>20</sup> Individual copies of this Journal are extant in *The Ontario Archives, Toronto*, and *The Public Reference Library, Toronto*.

<sup>21</sup> William Perkins Bull, *From Macdonell to McGuigan, The History of the Growth of the Roman Catholic Church in Upper Canada*, p. 120.

missionary to the more stable diocesan aspects of Catholicism in the Hamilton area. Born in Dublin on Nov. 1, 1791, and baptized an Anglican, Edward Gordon was converted to Catholicism in 1811, while still in Ireland, largely through the efforts of an older brother, Augier Francis.<sup>22</sup> He left Ireland for England in 1814, to live with his brother in Woolwich.<sup>23</sup> In 1817 Edward Gordon emigrated to Canada, landing at Quebec. Later he became one of Bishop Macdonell's first theological students at St. Raphael, and was ordained there on Jan. 29, 1829. Remaining at the seminary for one year, he taught and served as missionary in the area. In 1830 Fr. Gordon was appointed to "the missions above York" as assistant to the Rev. Dr. William O'Grady. At this time Bishop Macdonell spoke highly of the young priest's ability;<sup>24</sup> and in 1835 named him resident priest at Niagara. Here, in 1835, he began the building of the first Catholic church in the Niagara peninsula.

On Nov. 13, 1846, Fr. Gordon replaced Fr. McDonald in Hamilton. He became Vicar General to Bishop de Charbonnel in 1851, and was given Fr. A. Carayon as assistant in Hamilton. On the establishment of the new diocese of Hamilton he was named its first Vicar General; and this post he continued to hold for the rest of his life. He also remained rector of St. Mary's in Hamilton, now the Cathedral Church, though he was in semi-retirement because of ill-health after 1862. Late in life, the doughty old missionary essayed successfully a last major voyage. In fulfillment of a long-cherished desire, he left Hamilton on May 24, 1864, enroute to Rome

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<sup>22</sup> It seems that Edward Gordon was a son of parents, one of whom was Catholic, the other Anglican, although it is uncertain which of them was Catholic. His mother died shortly after Edward was born, and the infant was raised by his father until that man's death in 1796. Subsequently an uncle cared for the boy until death too claimed him in 1811.

<sup>23</sup> Details concerning Gordon's family are conflicting. An obituary in *The Canadian Freeman*, Oct. 20, 1870, speaks of one brother, Augier Francis, the eldest, with whom Edward stayed in Woolwich, England, from 1814-17; and of another brother whom Edward joined in Quebec in 1817. Fr. Gordon himself, however, speaks of an only brother whom he visited in Woolwich in 1843 (see report of Fr. Gordon's address to the Catholics of Niagara on his departure from them: *The Catholic*, July 12, 1843).

Perhaps the two brothers emigrated to Canada, and Edward remained while Augier returned to England. Whether this conjecture is valid or not, it seems certain that in 1843 Fr. Gordon convinced his elder brother to return with him to Canada; for a source who knew Fr. Gordon in Hamilton in the late 1840's, relates that the priest lived there with an older brother, who had accompanied Fr. Gordon from Niagara: "Old-Timer" in *The Canadian Register*, Oct. 5, 1905.

<sup>24</sup> A letter from Macdonell to Dr. O'Grady referred to Fr. Gordon as "too efficient a missionary to leave him a vicar when he is capable of being a principal"; and another reads: "Mr. Gordon possesses the genuine spirit of the Apostolic missionary ... blessed with solid judgment and good sense," quoted in Bull, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

to visit the Holy Father, Pius IX.<sup>25</sup> He died six years later in Hamilton, on October 20, 1870, at the age of 77.

The assistant priest at St. Mary's Hamilton, in 1856 was the Rev. Augustine Carayon. A French ecclesiastical student recruited by Bishop de Charbonnel from the Seminary of Rodez, he had come to Canada with the Bishop in 1850 as a sub-deacon. While completing his theological studies, presumably privately, he acted as de Charbonnel's secretary. Upon ordination in 1851, Fr. Carayon was assigned as Fr. Gordon's assistant in Hamilton. Here he remained for some ten years, and he is credited with being chiefly instrumental in the erection of the two Catholic Separate Schools in that city in 1855-56. Subsequently, Fr. Carayon was resident priest in Brantford, from 1861 until 1868. In the latter year ill-health warranted a leave of absence and a return to his native land. The leave of absence, however, became permanent. Records indicate that, after a brief sojourn in Orient, his birthplace, Fr. Carayon was named pastor of the church of Notre Dame, in Millau, Arières, and that he laboured there for more than twenty-five years.<sup>26</sup>

The other two major centres of Catholic activity in the new diocese, as exemplified by the location of the clergy in 1856, were Guelph and the German Catholic settlements of Waterloo County, principally Wilmot (St. Agatha) and St. Clement's.<sup>27</sup> The community of Guelph was founded in 1827

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<sup>25</sup> *The True Witness* (Montreal), June 3, 1864.

<sup>26</sup> See Causse, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>27</sup> Contemporary conditions might lead one to think of three other communities in this area as more important than either Wilmot or St. Clement's: viz. Preston, Galt and Kitchener. In the second quarter of the 19th century, however, this was not the case, at least not from the point of view of the condition of Catholicism in the district. Preston, like other centres in the area had been visited by Frs. Wiriath, Schneider and Sanderl (cf. *infra*, pp. 10-13), and a stone church was erected in 1840 under Fr. Schneider, although it was still unfinished in 1842. The Jesuits served this community and organized a Separate School in 1848 or 1849, which however, did not flourish long. The town did not receive a resident priest until the arrival there of the Rev. Jonas Lenhart on March 25, 1905 (Spetz, *op. cit.*, pp. 19, 146).

Galt is mentioned as a mission attended from Wilmot by Fr. Holzer, S.J., in 1851; and it was likely visited before that time by other Jesuit missionaries in the area. Fr. Holzer tried to encourage the Catholic residents to build a church and, in 1852, Fr. McNulty, an Irish priest attached to the Diocese of Toronto, visited Galt, and saw to the purchase of property for a church site (cf. *supra*, p. 2). Bishop Farrell dedicated a church there on May 6, 1860, but Galt obtained a resident priest only with the coming of the Rev. Jeremiah Ryan in July, 1876 (Spetz, *op. cit.*, pp. 164, 166). This was the same Fr. Ryan who was resident in Brantford in 1856. Berlin (Kitchener) only began to assume any prominence in Waterloo County after it was chosen as county seat in 1852. A Catholic church projected in 1854 was under construction in 1855, and was dedicated by Bishop Farrell in 1856, possibly the first dedication conducted by Bishop Farrell in his

by John Galt, a representative of the Canada Company. In the same year Galt assigned property in the new townsite to Bishop Macdonell for the erection of a Catholic church and seminary. This was the ideal height of ground overlooking the town still occupied by the principal Catholic establishments of Guelph. The first Catholic church was built there by the Rev. John Cullen, who reported it under construction on May 13, 1833. The first resident priest was Rev. Thomas Gibney, who arrived in Guelph in 1837. According to Spetz, he remained there until October, 1846.<sup>28</sup> During his tenure, the original church was destroyed by fire, on October 10, 1844, and Fr. Gibney undertook to rebuild it in stone. He died, however, before the new church was completed, apparently the victim of accidental death, on October 17, 1846. Subsequent resident priests were: the Rev. Simon Sanderl, C.S.S.R., 1846-50; the Rev. John Cullen again, 1850-1852; and the Rev. John Holzer, S.J., 1852-63.

Fr. Sanderl was given charge of the German missions in Waterloo County by Bishop Gaulin, successor to Bishop Macdonell. He arrived in the district in 1844, and made his home in Wilmot, living in two rooms of a church-school there for two years. In October, 1847, Fr. Sanderl left Wilmot to take up residence in Guelph. Difficulties with a parishioner concerning the burial of a child in 1850 forced his departure from Guelph, and he sought refuge in a hermitage on an island in Puslinch Lake, where he remained for some two years.<sup>29</sup> In 1852, he went to Gethsemani, Kentucky, and joined the Trappists. He died there, February 27, 1879.

The Society of Jesus undertook the care of Guelph mission in 1852, in the person of the Rev. John Holzer; and the Jesuits remained in charge of that parish until the 1930's. Fr. Holzer was a very colorful and energetic figure among the group of early Upper Canadian clergy. A native of Austria, he had been professor at the Jesuit university in Innsbruck until the revolutionary activity of the late 1840's forced him to flee into Russia. One of his companions in flight is said to have been Maximilian Bonaparte, the later ill-starred emperor of Mexico. Fr. Holzer eventually made his way to

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new diocese (Spetz, *op. cit.*, p. 98-9). The Rev. George Laufhuber, S.J., resided in Berlin from 1857 to 1859, and began a Separate School in the village, Spetz also speaks of an abortive attempt to begin a German language Catholic weekly, *Neuigkeiten*, in 1858, but no copies of the paper are extant. Berlin acquired a permanent pastor in the Rev. Louis Funcken, C.R., when he moved his St. Jerome's College from Wilmot to Berlin in 1866 (Spetz, *op. cit.*, p. 107).

<sup>28</sup> Spetz, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

<sup>29</sup> The story, told by Spetz, is that Fr. Sanderl refused to bury a child's body until after her parent had contributed a stipend to the priest, whereupon the father, refusing to do so, took the body and buried it himself. Apparently there was general resentment in the community against Fr. Sanderl because of his unjustifiable stand in the matter, and he gave up his charge; Spetz, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

America, and became attached to the Jesuit Mission of New York, which included Canada at that time. He was subsequently sent by his superiors to the diocese of Toronto and, along with the Rev. William Kettler, S.J., was appointed to the pastoral charge of New Germany (Maryhill) in Waterloo County. According to Spetz, Fr. Holzer arrived in New Germany in the late fall of 1848; it was he who arranged for the completion of a new church there and for its dedication on the first Sunday of Advent, 1848.<sup>30</sup> When Guelph mission fell vacant in 1852, de Charbonnel urged him to go there. Fr. Holzer was the major force in stabilizing Catholicism in that town, and in 1854 he founded its Jesuit house, becoming its first superior. He envisaged a great church in Guelph, comparable in magnificence to the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome, and projected an extensive personal fund-raising campaign to his native country, as well as to Mexico, where he hoped to enlist the financial support of his friend, the Emperor Maximilian. However, Fr. Holzer became ill before he could carry out these plans. In September, 1863, he was stricken with severe paralysis. Forced to relinquish the superiorship at Guelph, he nevertheless lived for many years as an invalid in various Jesuit houses in the United States. He died at Georgetown College in May, 1888.<sup>31</sup>

The settlements of German Catholics in Waterloo County were among the earliest centres of Catholicism in the new diocese of Hamilton. The focal point of religious activity in the 1820's and early 1830's was Wilmot (St. Agatha). The first resident priest to minister to the settlers in the area was the Rev. John Louis Wiriath, sent by Bishop Macdonell. He laboured as a missionary in the area for some three years, before returning to his native Alsace in 1837. Apparently he later asked for and obtained permission from his Bishop for a second sojourn in Canada; but no records have been found to indicate that he actually undertook a second missionary journey. Fr. Wiriath died at Marienthal, Lower Alsace, in 1844.<sup>32</sup>

After Fr. Wiriath's departure in 1837, the Catholics of Waterloo County were again without the services of a priest, until the Rev. Peter Schneider, also an Alsatian, arrived in the district early in 1838. Fr. Schneider settled in New Germany, and remained until March, 1844, when Fr. Sanderl arrived in Wilmot. He then moved farther west to the Stratford-Goderich area, remaining there until 1869, although he returned to Waterloo County for a three-month period in 1847, when Fr. Sanderl left Wilmot for Guelph. In 1869, Fr. Schneider resigned his charge in Goderich and returned to Europe. He died near Lyons, France, on July

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<sup>30</sup> Spetz, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>31</sup> An obituary of Fr. Holzer appears in *The Catholic Record*, May 26, 1888. The Church of Our Lady Immaculate in Guelph, perhaps less magnificent than that envisaged by Fr. Holzer, but nonetheless a truly impressive monument to Catholicism in that town, was dedicated a few months after Holzer's death, on October 10, 1888.

<sup>32</sup> Spetz, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

30, 1880.<sup>33</sup>

Catholicism among the German settlements in the Waterloo County area also owes a considerable debt to its early Jesuit missionaries, who laboured there from 1847. Bishop Power secured the services of two Jesuit priests at this time, the Rev. Lucas Caveng, S.J., and the Rev. Bernard Fritsch, S.J., and one lay brother, Pilz by name. A third priest, the Rev. Joseph Sadler, S.J., arrived on Jan. 18, 1848, but remained only a few months before secularizing himself and moving to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Regular services were held by the Jesuits in Wilmot, where they all resided, and in St. Clement's, New Prussia and New Germany, with stations at Galt, Preston, Williamsburg, Strassburg, South East Hope and Rainham.<sup>34</sup>

The Rev. Rupert Ebner, S.J., who was resident priest at Wilmot when the diocese of Hamilton was formed in 1856, arrived there in 1849. He was responsible for enlarging the church in this village, and for erecting a fine stone school there in 1854. He remained in Wilmot until June, 1856. Of the two original Jesuit missionaries here, Fr. Caveng is known to have been transferred to Buffalo in 1850. He was replaced by the Rev. Joseph Ritter, S.J., from 1850 to 1851, and by the Rev. Joseph Fruzzini, S.J., in 1852, but returned himself in 1853, presumably for a brief period. Spetz declares that for the rest of the time Fr. Ebner was alone in Wilmot.<sup>35</sup> Other Jesuit missionaries whose names appear in early Waterloo County Catholic history are the Rev. John Holzer, S.J.,<sup>36</sup> the Rev. Andrew Kohler, S.J., and the Rev. William Kettler, S.J. These men came originally to New Germany, but moved to Guelph early in 1852 to replace Fr. Cullen.

In the same year, 1852, St. Clement's received its first resident priest, in the person of the Rev. Columban Messner, O.C., a native of the Tyrol.<sup>37</sup> Coming to St. Clement's as a young man, he ministered there for some fourteen years, until 1866. He left St. Clement's on June 17th of that year, to return to Europe, but had only proceeded as far as Rochester, N.Y., when illness forced him to enter hospital there. He died in Rochester on Jan. 11, 1867. While in St. Clement's, Fr. Messner undertook the construction of a new and larger church in 1853 to replace the original building. The new structure was completed in 1858. The last years of Fr. Messner's stay in the village seem to have been marked by strife between priest and congregation, apparently arising from financial and legal difficulties over church and school property. The parish was under interdict from May 29, 1865 until June 17, 1866.

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<sup>33</sup> Spetz, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-16.

<sup>34</sup> Spetz, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>35</sup> Spetz, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *supra*, p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> Nothing is known of his birth or early life.

In general outline, this was the situation of Catholicism in what was to become the new diocese of Hamilton in 1856. On May 11th of that year, the Rt. Rev. John Farrell was consecrated first Bishop of Hamilton, and a new era for the Catholic Church in the district began.