

Church of St. Gregory the Great

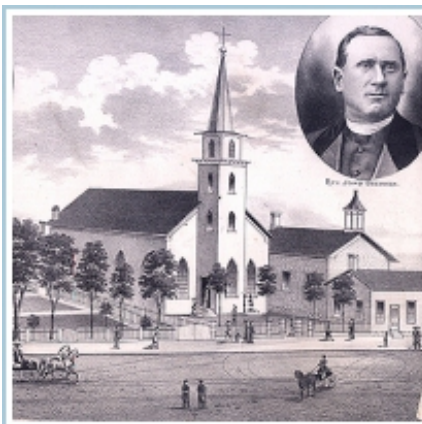
The following offers samples from a historical chronicle written circa 1930:

As early as 1668 we find the introduction and spreading of Catholicity in this section of the Province made by the Sulpician Fathers. These zealous men coming from Quebec and Ville-Marie, Montreal, built their mission in the Consecon district, approximately at the point where the present Loyalist Parkway, Highway 33 passes over the Murray Canal. This little assemblage of Wigwams, the centre of their activities, they named Kente. Here Father Trauve and his companion, Father Fenelon, were in charge, and from this point, assisted by their confreres; they attended their missions for hundreds of miles around about the countryside. From 1668 to 1680 history more or less vividly pictures for us the hardships which these men of God underwent to make their Master known and worshipped among the savages.



From 1680 to 1830 little is known of religious activities. At just what date a church was established in the town of Picton cannot be definitely ascertained, but in the year 1840, and again in 1844, rather extensive repair work was made upon that structure, leaving us to judge it was quite some years previous to those dates. The work was done during the regime of Reverend Murt Lalor, who resided here from 1837 to 1870. During his time many worthy and important events are recorded. In the year 1841 the deed for the parish house was registered. On May 28, of the same year, the stations of the cross were canonically erected. On November 5, of the year 1845 a bell for the Church was blessed; and Thomas

Cullihie coming on as sexton, began the ringing of it. Two days later, November 7th the confraternity of the Brown Scapular was established in the parish, at which ceremony his Lordship, Bishop Phelan officiated, assisted by his secretary Reverend Patrick Dollard.



Finally just before the end of his pastorate here in 1870, Father Lalor made an arrangement and agreement whereby this parish house be paid for, the cost of \$3000.00, which was to be defrayed by three payments during three consecutive years, 1870-1871-1872.

In the year 1870 Rev. Jon Brennan became pastor. About 1885 he began a subscription by a personal donation of \$250.00 for repairing and decorating the Church. The amount subscribed in all was \$3599.25, which showed the spirit of generosity which prevailed among the people at the time. But shortly after that time agitation began for erecting a new Church, as the old one was quite dilapidated and it was not the wish of his Grace, Archbishop Cleary to spend more upon it, judging it wiser to erect a new one.

His Grace made several visits here in connection with the endeavor, which by now had developed into quite a serious problem. The parishioners were not greatly in sympathy with the movement, mostly due to a poor harvest. The envelope offerings dwindled rapidly, and in fact, their cooperation was lacking to such an extent that during the two following years only \$1073.00 was collected.

It was at this time 1887 that Father Brennan was transferred to Brewers Mills parish, Rev. Jon. H. McDonagh succeeded him here.

In the year 1888, arrangements were made for the building of the foundation of the Church at a cost of \$1500.00 to \$2000.00 towards which his Grace personally contributed \$500.00. However, the work was actually effected only in 1891.

In the meantime, 1870, the land for the present Mount Olivet Cemetery was obtained. The foundation of the Church having finally begun in 1891, the main structure was built the following year, the laying of the corner stone taking place on September 4th of that year, 1892.

The following year this House of God was dedicated, the whole event being such as to leave a lasting memory in the minds of those who had the pleasure of witnessing it.

On the evening of Wednesday, October 4th 1893, at seven o'clock His Grace, Most Reverend Doctor J. V. Cleary arrived here on the steamer "Deseronto", and as it gracefully slowed up to the wharf, the local brass band musically saluted the distinguished prelate. Hundreds of men, women and children, Catholics and Non Catholics, congregated at the landing wharf to extend the greatest reception and most cordial welcome ever before bestowed upon a Bishop by the populace of Picton.



On Thursday morning His Grace assisted by several of the Priests, dedicated the handsome new Church to St. Gregory the Great. At the conclusion Major Harrigan, on behalf of the congregation read the address.

"This church, the dedication of which occasioned so much joy and spiritual happiness to the Archbishop, the Pastor, and the congregation, was beyond a doubt one of the most handsome of the the diocese. The building, 120 feet long, the nave of which is 32 feet wide, and the transepts 63 feet wide, is a substantial and ornamental structure, beautifully and gracefully trimmed with cut stone. It is Gothic in style, with lancet windows and fine tracery transoms over the doors of the entrance, also tracery windows in front gable and pediments of the roof. The ceiling is fifty feet high in the nave, finished in fine wood paneling, and presenting a most elaborate appearance. On the left of the front entrance is the Baptistry, on the right a circular tower, in which is the staircase leading to the choir gallery. The gallery railing is beautifully worked in Gothic panels, the spaces in front of and between the posts filled in with Gothic Brackets and arches. The

bell tower is situated between the north transept and the chancel. The seats and Communion rail handsomely designed of ash, are of substantial workmanship and the gates of the Communion rail nicely wrought of iron. The Church was then heated by Hot-air furnace. The contract for the Church was let by tender and was secured by Hugh Quinlan, Belleville Contractor. John Connelly, R.C.A. was the architect.

St. Gregory the Great, for whom this church is named, was Pope from the year 590 until his death in the year 604. It was Gregory who imposed universal celibacy on the clergy, among other reforms of the church. He was the first Pope to send missionaries to England after seeing children from the island Kingdom, whom he described as "angels", because of their fair hair and complexion.

The parish since its inception in 1836 has had 20 pastors, the incumbent being Father Thomas Thazhappally, OSH.