

CATHEDRAL SCHOOL

The Fiftieth Anniversary
of the "New" Cathedral School

***130 Years at the Heart of
Catholic Education in Pembroke***

50+



 *Schools to believe in!*

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Cathedral Catholic School, 200 Isabella Street, Pembroke, Ontario K8A 5S7 ♦ May 2005

by Bruce Pappin

Introduction

This year Cathedral Catholic School has been celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the construction of our current building. Started in 1954, the "new" building replaced a venerable structure, the "old" Cathedral School. The original building, on the site of the west playground, was built in 1874, replacing in its turn a modest wooden one-room school. For the last quarter of the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth, Cathedral School was the heart of Catholic education in Pembroke.

Pioneers

On April 20, 1847 a young English doctor, Francis Codd, wrote a letter home to his parents. "Here is an amateur drawing of Miramichi Church, all of wood about 40 feet by 20." He continued, "there are no pews or even seats yet, and the windows are not finished, we had Mass there the Sunday before last and pretty cold it was; the North wind whistled through, and it came fresh from the Lake and the floor was mostly a sheet of ice."

This was the Catholic faith in its infancy in Pembroke. Early that year the Diocese of Bytown had been erected, with Joseph Eugene Guigues as Bishop. One of his first acts was to order the construction of a church to serve the Catholic families of the Pembroke district.

The first church, described by Francis Codd, was built on land midway between the two small settlements of Miramichi and Moffatville, later known as Pembroke. The property was donated by a Protestant, Daniel Fraser, and was located across from 557 Pembroke Street East, the building which was later to house the first Catholic General Hospital.



First served by Father James Lynch, the priest in charge of Allumette Island, Pembroke received her first resident priest in 1856, Father John Gillie. On February 11, 1864 a meeting of local Catholics led to the establishment of Union Separate School Section One of the Township and Village of Pembroke. The first board of trustees was composed of James Heenan, James Davidson, William Murray, Archie McDonald, Robert Gillies and John Cunningham. Father Murray Tardiff, recently retired after a long career with the Diocese, is the great-grandson of William Murray. The Turstees' first meeting was held March 25, 1864 and a 28'X42' wooden building was built across from the church, near the future General Hospital.

The first teacher was Richard Devlin of Ottawa, hired at a salary of \$300 per year. It took Devlin three days to walk to Pembroke from Ottawa. The school at this time served 50 students. A monthly fee of 15 pence (25¢) was charged, later reduced to 15¢ in 1869.

In 1868 Father Gillie arranged for the foundation of the Convent of Mary Immaculate of the Grey Sisters, and the first sisters arrived on May 14. Among the three pioneers was Sister Dorothy Kirby, left, who took over the Catholic School and was to become the first principal of Cathedral School.

By the early 1870s it was becoming plain that Pembroke was rapidly pulling ahead of Miramichi, or Lowertown, and the decision was made to move the Convent of Mary Immaculate to a new building located on what was known as the Sand Hill, a commanding site on Renfrew Street overlooking the Ottawa River. Begun in 1871 and finished the following year, the convent was soon joined by St. Columbkille's Cathedral, started in 1874. At the same time, the decision was made to build a new school on church property fronting on Moffat Street.

The village was approached to assist with financing the new school, however council was unable to help. The Separate School Board being unable to raise the necessary funds, a \$3,000 loan at 9% was taken out on the personal security of a number of the rate-payers. The loan was paid off in three years. In January 1875 the Pembroke Separate School, later to be known as Cathedral School, opened its doors to 230 students under the leadership of Sister Dorothy Kirby, who would remain as principal until 1878. The school featured four classrooms and was capped with an open belfry. The late nineteenth century was a booming time for Pembroke and in 1885

**Top right, a class photo from around 1906.
Right, the "baby class" taken around 1916.**



Isabella Street on a wintery day in 1894. In the left foreground is the Pembroke High School, built in 1885, later to become the Catholic High School and finally St. Columba's Boys' School. Behind it is the Separate School which became Cathedral School in 1923.

a four-room addition was built. The school was now staffed by six teachers and accommodated 266 children. In 1888 two more teachers were added, filling the remaining vacant classrooms.

In 1896 a third addition was built, this one with a basement, with a view to accommodating a central heating system. Prior to the addition of central heating, the classrooms were heated with woodstoves. The furnace and hot-water heat added in 1906 were a welcome development, however the addition of indoor plumbing the same year was probably greeted with even more enthusiasm. Facilities were located in the basement and are remembered as being somewhat grim.

The addition accommodated two more classrooms as well as space for fraternal organizations. The final addition to the old Cathedral School building was made in 1913 with the addition of an auditorium on the third floor along with further accommodation for fraternal groups. At this time the Pembroke Separate School accommodated 500 students in 12 classrooms.

Cathedral School

In 1923 an eight-room school, St. Jean Baptiste, (now Holy Name School) was built in the west end of Pembroke and the Pembroke Separate School became known as Cathedral School. No longer the only primary Catholic school in the town, Cathedral still occupied a prominent place due to its location near St. Columbkille's Cathedral. Although St. Jean Baptiste was the primary French Separate School, there were always a number of French "rooms" operating at Cathedral School as well.



During this period, primary classes were divided into seven grades. The first level was known as "baby class". From there students proceeded through "first book", "second book", "junior third", "senior third", "junior fourth", and "senior fourth". Following senior fourth students tried their entrance exams and proceeded to high school. Several local options were available, including the Pembroke High School and the Convent of Mary Immaculate. Following the opening of Pembroke Collegiate Institute in 1928, the former High School was acquired by the Parish and a Catholic High School opened at the instigation of Father William Peter Breen. The Catholic High School was operated by the Grey Nuns until 1948, when it was taken over by the Christian Brothers.



The school before the addition of the third-floor auditorium, in 1905, top, and after the 1913 renovations in 1928, bottom. This building faced Moffat Street, and was located where the west playground is now. Right, a photo taken on Isabella Street looking back towards Moffat Street shows the front of Cathedral School with the High School behind. The girls in the photo are former students Rose, Elizabeth and Kath Carmody.



Classes started at 9:00am and ended at 4:00pm. There were two 15-minute recesses and a long lunch hour. All students walked to school, from all over the town, and many walked home for lunch as well. During the Depression a school milk program provided a free half-pint of milk to each student three times a week. Although many of the teachers were Grey Nuns, there were many lay teachers as well, especially in the French school which operated alongside English classes in Cathedral School.

The curriculum featured reading and writing classes, spelling, geography, history, arithmetic, and catechism. The emphasis was on memory work and discipline was strict. Sister Mary Alexis, principal from 1931 to 1938, carried a strap in the skirt of her habit and was prepared to use it on unruly students who were noisy, caught not paying attention, or throwing chalk at the teachers. There was no physical education or formal music studies, although some students recall “drawing classes.” Students were expected to attend 8:15 Mass every Monday morning.

Students participated in pageants and concerts, held in the large hall on the third floor. Christmas pageants, Passion plays, St. Patrick’s shows and other events were all performed in the hall, as were banquets and receptions. Rehearsals for concerts were usually held during lunch hour or after school before supper.

The playground was small and unfenced in the 1930s, so outside games tended to be small-scale – skipping, jacks and hopscotch for the girls, marbles and tag for the boys. Boys and girls had separate playgrounds, of course, and the separation was rigidly enforced.

Father Tim Holly played a big role in the students’ lives during the Depression. He organized a skating rink in the playground between Cathedral School and the High School, on the site occupied by the current building. His winter carnival and bean supper was a highlight of the winter for many, and children risked frozen toes skating on the rink, warming themselves beside the woodstove in the shack beside the rink.

Surprisingly, another of the highlights of the year was the handing out of report cards. Father Breen would take his place behind the teacher’s desk and call each student up in turn. He knew each student by name and always had a few words of encouragement. Visits from the school inspector, a Mr. Anderson, were not looked forward too as warmly and students sat terrified in their desks, praying not to be asked any questions.

All grades wrote examinations and eagerly ran down to Christiansen’s Service Press, now Runge Stationers, where the results were posted in the shop window in early July.

Although the location of the school next door to the Cathedral had many advantages, there were also risks, for example you might meet the Bishop in the yard. One student in the 1930s had been so drilled by his mother in the proper Episcopal etiquette – “Good Morning Your Excellency”, – that when unexpectedly confronted with the fearsome figure of Bishop Ryan he panicked, forgot his training and blurted out “Good Morning Jesus Christ!”



Class photos from around 1921, top, and grades 5/6, 1932.

Cathedral School Memories: Thoughts of a Pupil and a Neighbour...

The following reminiscences are written by Tim Houlihan. Tim is the son of Joe and Kit Houlihan and grew up on the corner of Mary and Moffat Streets. He completed his elementary schooling at Cathedral School, attended St. Columba's High, and graduated from Pembroke Collegiate and St. Mary's Teacher's College.

My schooling didn't begin next door to our home on the corner of Mary and Moffat Streets. With ambitious parents who wanted the best for their children, I had to start kindergarten at East Ward Public School in 1950, as it was a number of years before the current Cathedral School was constructed and opened its first kindergarten. I attended kindergarten half days, driven there, along with Christine and Joanne Bogart by a taxi belonging to their father, Art Bogart. From those days, all I recall is that the class had a sandbox, we had recess, and I got locked out when I didn't answer the bell.

The Cathedral School site played the major role in my early education. The schooling in the classroom and the education I got from observing the construction of the current building and the "deconstruction" of the old are among my strongest memories. I was a pupil at the old separate school from 1951 to June 1954. Grade 1 was with Sister Carmel Teresa, a most gentle person, with whom I maintained contact into my teen years as she was responsible for the altar boys at St. Columbkille's Cathedral. Grade 2 was with Sister Anna Rita and I lucked out by doing Grade 3 in split 3-4 classes with Miss Mary Flynn. Classes were in the same building that my dad, Joe Houlihan, had attended in the 1910-20 period. Sister Carmel Teresa used to quiet us by telling her pupils to listen silently and we may see the resident mouse cross the floor of the room. It happened at least once. The place was "bursting at the seams" with students. If I recall correctly, the topmost floor, an auditorium, was partitioned for additional classroom space.

The "old separate school" building was of a style that today would be cherished and restored as a heritage building. To the decision makers of the late 1940s, that was not to be. More teaching space was needed and I'm sure that life safety needs were being impressed on the board. Two modern schools were wanted: one English and the other for our French-speaking

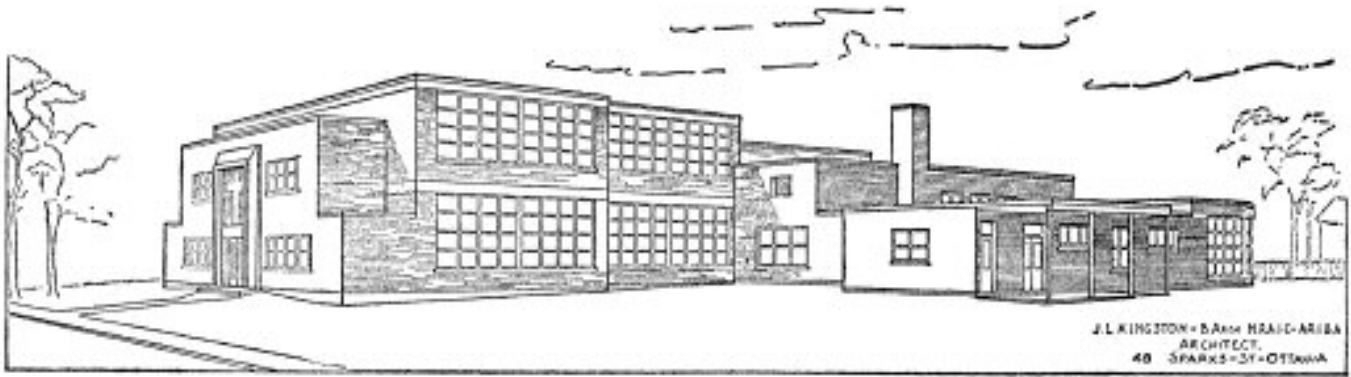
neighbours. The old had to make way for the new. As an aside, I don't recall if the "bilingual school" which shared the separate school building had a name at that time.

Building the 1954 Cathedral School started for the Houlihans and their neighbours a number of years earlier - about 1950/51. The separate school board of the period enlarged the site to allow a two-storey school to be built while the old Cathedral School continued in operation. Mother, Kit Houlihan, made sure that the board paid market value. She had to go to arbitration to get it, and she did.



Top photo, the grade one first communion class of 1951/52. Tim Houlihan is at the left of the third row. Above, the Houlihan house and Cathedral School, February 1, 1953. (bottom photo by J.R. Houlihan)

The school board assembled the land by purchasing 40 feet of the back lot of our property, which included a row of garages and our vegetable garden. Properties eastward along the north side of Mary Street, as far as what was the site of St. Columba's High School, had land taken too. We also lost our neighbours to the east, babysitters and playmates, from the Cecil Patterson and the Jack Carnegie families. Their two-storey brick semi-detached house, located where the Cathedral School's kindergarten playground is situated, was purchased by the board, rented out for a short while and then demolished.



By the summer of 1954, I had not only observed the construction of Cathedral School by M. Sullivan and Sons Ltd. under the direction of Mr. McMaster, I had seen a process that today is called “deconstruction”. I learned about the itinerant nature of skilled labour. Over the winter of 1952-53 my parents had “boarded” “Shorty” Crane from Bancroft, who was one of the bricklayers. From the start to the finish, I had observed all the construction details, asked many questions, got many answers, ran many errands to “Nitchske’s” to supply the crews on their breaks, and learned a new vocabulary which I wasn’t able to use at home.

One of my recollections is of the largest freestanding cement mixer I had ever seen. It was on four wheels, was charged manually, a shovel at a time and a bag of cement as required. It did have a hose connection to the water system. This was also the period when the Government of Canada was promoting “Winter Works” and year-round construction. The massive stockpile of aggregate dumped to the east of the site froze over the winter of 1953 and a boiler was installed adjacent to it. Steam jets were inserted into the pile to thaw and warm it. I also recall the smell of kerosene and the noise of the “salamanders” which were used to warm the work and workers within the tarped shelters as they cast the beams, and laid the brick and blocks through a cold Pembroke winter. Another vivid memory is of the demolition of the old school. A crew from an Ottawa demolition firm arrived following the 1953-54 school year and stripped the school of its desks, cast iron, steel pipes, copper wire, wooden beams and bricks. The crews brought mattresses and slept in the building as they did the salvage work. They re-used the doors to raise the sides of their trucks as they hauled the “salvage” away. It would be interesting to learn who was able and willingly practised the “re-use” portion of the environmental movement’s three “R’s” before it became common.

The school construction site was our neighbourhood playground. Unlike today, where the occupational health and safety regulations require an enclosed site, in those days it was possible to access the site 24/7. The partially constructed building was well equipped for “play” – lots of ladders to climb and planks to walk. We even had access to exotic pieces of “playground equipment”, a front-end loader was parked in our back yard and I recall many hours “working” on this machine.

Because of my “relationship” to the management and construction crews, I recall being able to examine the unset cornerstone, which was hollowed out to accept a sealed copper tube into which various bits and pieces of memorabilia were inserted. I seem to recall one of the plumbers or pipe fitters soldering a cap to at least one of the ends. I wonder what’s in that tube?



At the top of the page is Architect J.L. Kingston’s drawing of the new school from 1954. Below, the laying of the cornerstone, March 19, 1954. From left, Father Enright, Father Jones, Bishop Smith, Father Clarke, Father Owens, Father Schruder, Father Harrington and Father (later Bishop) Windle.



Above left, the demolition of the old school building during the summer of 1954. The new building is just visible to the left. Above right, Margaret and Tim Houlihan take advantage of their special “playground equipment”. Both photos are by J.R. Houlihan. Below, the new Cathdral School shortly after construction.

The “New” Cathedral School

The construction of the new Cathedral School building was part of the ambitious building program launched by Bishop William Smith, who arrived in Pembroke in 1945. It was one of two identical 12-room schools designed by J.L. Kingston of Ottawa, the other being St. Jean Baptiste. At this time Cathedral lost its French students, who transferred to the new French school. The \$280,000 building featured 12 classrooms in the main two-storey block of the building and the rear wings contained an auditorium, kindergarten and auxiliary rooms. The new school also had kitchen facilities and administration offices.

The Pembroke Observer reported that the cornerstone ceremony on March 19, 1954 was attended by top clerical and municipal officials and hundreds of area residents. Bishop Smith blessed and laid the cornerstone, assisted by Father Owens and Father Windle.

In a copper can in the cornerstone were placed the signatures of the 424 students and 10 teachers of Cathedral School, the signatures of Bishop Smith and the officiating clergy, Mayor J.J. Carmody, and J.L. Kingston.



The Changing Face of Education

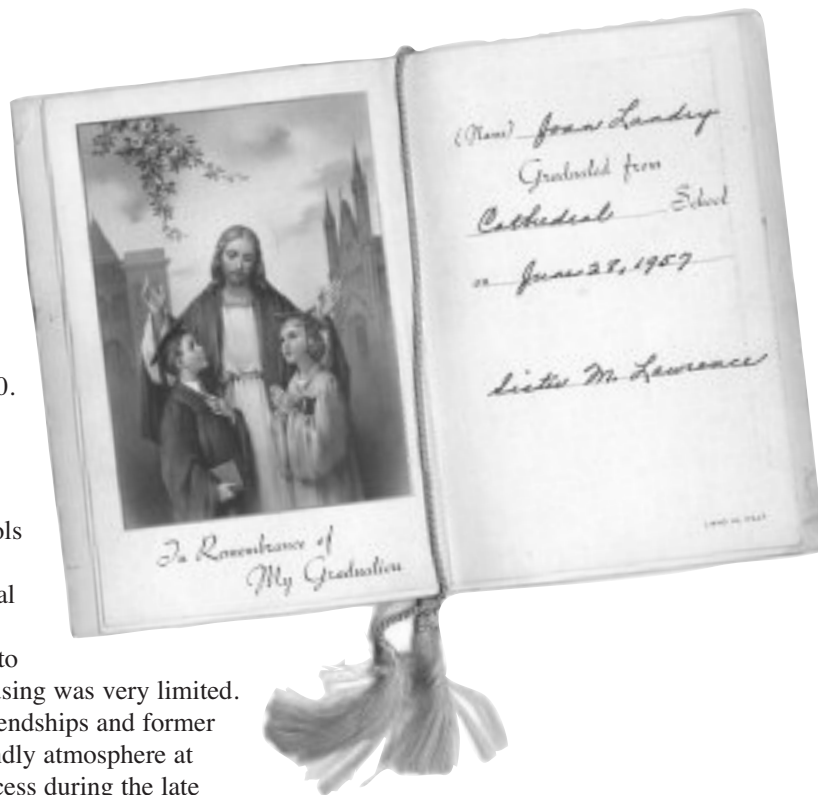
The post-war baby boom brought many changes to education, some quite gradual. School seems to have become somewhat more regimented and disciplined during the 1950s. One change was the introduction of uniforms for the girls. At first compulsory, the uniforms became optional during the 1960s and had pretty well disappeared by 1970. Discipline was fairly strict during this period and the strap was not uncommon, although it too gradually fell out of favour.

With the construction of additional Separate schools in Pembroke, beginning with St. Jean Baptiste in 1954 and accelerating through the 1960s, Cathedral School evolved into a much more neighborhood-oriented school. Most of the students still walked to class and most walked home for lunch as well. Busing was very limited. Walking to and from school led to many warm friendships and former students and staff invariably comment on the friendly atmosphere at Cathedral. Staff were often joined at lunch and recess during the late 1960s by teachers from the former boys' school next door which was being used by the board as an "overflow" school.

The participation of Religious dropped off during the 1950s and '60s. Although all principals until 1977 were nuns, and all but the last were resident at the Convent of Mary Immaculate, through the 1960s the proportion of nuns teaching dropped steadily. The priests no longer played as large a role in the day-to-day life of the school. There was still a strong tie to St. Columbkille's. Although students were no longer expected to attend Mass every Monday morning, the tradition of "First Fridays" was maintained throughout the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. A Mass was held for students on the first Friday of every month at the Cathedral, usually just before lunch. In the early 1960s, discipline was very strict for these masses. Students were marched into church and girls who had forgotten their hats had a piece of Kleenex pinned to their hair. The nuns in charge were armed with "clappers", spring-loaded wooden noisemakers. "CLAP" – the students genuflected – "CLAP" – the students knelt – "CLAP" – they sat. They were similarly "clapped" out of Mass. Strict silence was observed in the cathedral.

St. Columbkille's provided another resource, the CWL "friendly cupboard". The Catholic Women's League operated a second-hand clothing depot at the Cathedral and needy children were sometimes provided for out of their supplies. It also provided a convenient source of spare footwear for children who lost boots on the muddy walk to school.

Teachers active at this time fondly remember the flexibility in the curriculum which allowed them the time to provide variety and challenging and entertaining learning experiences for the students. While there was plenty of time for memory work and drilling of spelling and times tables, there was also time to take field trips to local marshes to collect specimens. Almira McGuire, who taught at Cathedral for a decade following 1968, recalls having a wading pool in the classroom with frogs and mud puppies. She looked out one day to see a boy carrying a large snapping turtle across the playground. The turtle spent the rest of the day in school. Another field trip took the class flying on Pem-Air's pre-war DC3



Sister St. Irene's Grade 4/5 class of 1962.

aircraft. For half an hour the class flew over Pembroke and Allumette Island. Field trips were rare in the early 1960s, but became increasingly important through the 1970s.

By the 1960s there were special teachers coming to teach French and music, and “phys-ed” became part of the curriculum. The music program picked up dramatically during the 1970s, with school choirs becoming active in the Kiwanis Festival and a strong choir program which provided music for special Masses at St. Columbkille’s. Other community activities included public speaking and visits to City Hall and Marianhill, where students interviewed residents about local history.

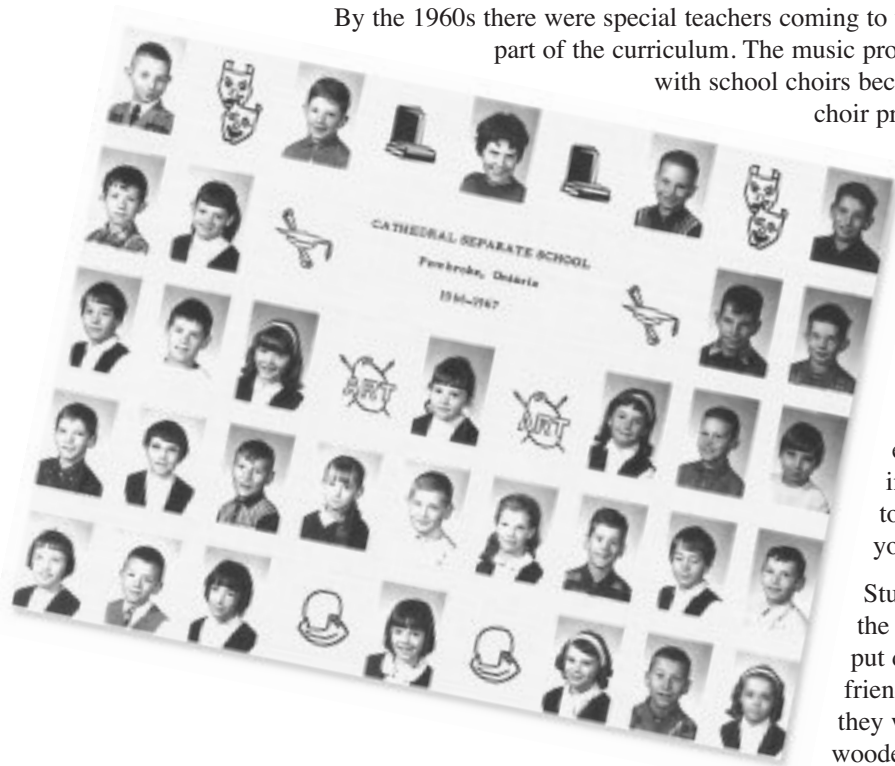
During the late 1970s, Cathedral School published a series of newspapers during Education Week which were written by the students and provide a glimpse into student life at Cathedral. Students explained why they felt education is important. Wendy Bissonette reported in 1975, “It makes you a better person. It helps you to communicate with the outside world. It also helps you to discover your talents and skills.”

Students considered what they would do if they were the mayor of Pembroke (try and tell all the stores to put down their prices); what happiness is (going to a friend’s cottage and almost catching a fish); and what they would do with a million dollars (build a big wooden bunny to play on). Finally, Cheri Wilson shared with us what scared her – nothing!

On a more serious note, the 1978 edition carried a tribute to Miss Mary Flynn. To do justice to the number of truly exemplary teachers associated with Cathedral School during its history would require hundreds of pages. Mary Flynn’s name stands out because it comes up in discussions with almost anyone associated with the school from the 1920s to the late 1960s. From her work ensuring hungry children had food during the Depression to pioneering audiovisual services in the ’60s, Miss Flynn left an indelible mark on everyone with whom she came in touch. The following tribute was written by students Tina Haramis, Gregory Sheridan and Duane Chaisson, with Mr. Cotnam: “*She began teaching at Cathedral School*

in 1927. In the years from 1927 to 1966 her teaching and lifestyle undoubtedly influenced thousands of children, with her kindness, her gentle and quiet style of living and her genuine love and interest in people of all ages from every walk of life. Regardless of how busy she was she always had the time to talk to you, walk with you, give guidance and simply make you feel great.” “She touched thousands of us with her cheerful and energetic style of living and living very close to Jesus. She also taught us to love one another and that is regardless of individual differences.” “Let us persist daily to carry on Miss Flynn’s style of living into the future for each day of our lives.”

Cathedral School’s library is named in honour of Miss Flynn.



Mr. Sicoli and the 1975 Cathedral School choir.

Our Principal



The 1975 edition of **Cathedral in Community**, the first to be published, carried a profile of two of the school's most influential people of the day, including these fine illustrations.

"Sister Marilyn is our principal. She has brown curly hair and she has glasses on. Her shoes have buckles. She smiles at you. We went to visit Sister in her office. She said 'Welcome to the principal's office'. We looked around and Jimmy sat in Sister's chair. We saw the fire bell and the recess bell. There were fish hanging from the ceiling but they weren't real. Sister Marilyn's job is to look after all the kids in the school and she helped us get hot chocolate and took pictures at our carnival too."

Mrs. McConeghy is our school secretary. She has her own office. We saw it. It had big boxes all stuck together to keep stuff in. Mrs. McConeghy types on a typewriter. She makes letters for us to take

home to our Moms and Dads. She uses a big machine that makes lots more papers the same as the one she typed. When the phone rings Mrs. McConeghy answers it. She says 'Good Morning - Cathedral School.'"

The Secretary



While these job descriptions are essentially accurate, one of the principal's jobs was left out. Alfie Sicoli recalls arriving one morning in a newly purchased leisure suit, flowered shirt fashionably unbuttoned at the collar, only to be met at the door by Sister Marilyn who sent him scurrying back home in search of a tie. He found the brightest, widest tie in his closet and returned to work. Women teachers looking for a relaxation in the dress code in the late 1960s were a bit more successful. After spending some time working up their courage to ask Sister Mary Josephine if they could wear pant suits to work, they were relieved to find that Sister considered pant suits a desirable alternative to the equally popular and somewhat more risqué miniskirts.



Above, some classroom scenes from the 1970s. Fortunately for Cathedral's history, Sheila Farrell's mother never discarded anything. Shown here are her kindergarten graduation certificate from 1972 and her grade 6 graduation from 1978. Sheila is shown receiving her 1976 "Best Attendance" award from Mr. Sicoli.

Modern Times...

For Cathedral, as for the world, the second last decade of the century brought many changes – some good, some bad, all of them challenging.

For educators it was a world of rapidly changing educational theories, as “whole language” replaced phonics, and strictly regimented spelling standards were relaxed in the interest of increased spontaneity and creativity.

That old stand-by of discipline, “the strap”, having moved from Sister’s pocket to the desk drawer, was relegated to the museum. This meant replacing decades-old systems of discipline with new and challenging systems of negotiation, contracting and compromise.

A major change that occurred during this period was increased busing. No longer were students walking dozens of blocks to get to school. At the same time, going home for lunch became a thing of the past for most students due to the increased numbers travelling by bus and a steady increase in the number of homes with two working parents.

Towards the end of the 1980s, the major impact was the introduction of a new technology that created strong and divergent opinions and forever altered the face of learning – the personal computer. Teachers and students both struggled to come to grips with the new technology, although the students soon outstripped many of the teachers in their familiarity with the new tools. Constant experimentation with finding appropriate and constructive uses for computers finally led to the creation of a computer lab. At first a novelty and a treat, the machines soon became just another tool in the students’ learning experience.

In 1991, the provincial government introduced an anti-recession program and the Board received a grant of \$1.2 million for renovations to Cathedral School. Mechanical, electrical and fire safety systems were dramatically overhauled and the school



was essentially rebuilt from the walls in. A new front entrance, designed by the Pembroke architectural firm of Morris Thuemen Architects, was the most visible aspect of the renovation, above. The renovated school was officially opened on May 3, 1992.

A frightening change that made its appearance in the late 1980s was the increasing incidence of food and environmental allergies. That old lunch-box standby, peanut butter, became a bit scary, and the “Epipen” found its way into schools. The seriousness of the situation was brought shockingly home in September 2003 when a student at Bishop Smith Catholic High School, Sabrina Shannon, died of anaphylactic shock. The cautious awareness of the potentially tragic consequences of food allergies are now an



Left, Mr. Sicoli’s ever-present guitar accompanies Jennifer Delaurier, left, and Jessica McKay, right, in 1999. Below, a class group from 1991.



inescapable part of the school environment. Health and safety issues came to the fore again in 2003 when increasing concerns over the safety of pressure-treated wooden play structures led to a major investment in the primary playground. A completely new structure replaced the wooden equipment that summer.

In the mid-1990s, Mike Harris' "Common-Sense Revolution" came to Ontario. At Cathedral Catholic School, as in schools across the province, the consequences for students and teachers were more work and less money. As funding for "frills" like libraries, arts programs and field trips dried up, an intensified curriculum saw Cathedral students studying subjects formerly reserved for high school or even university level courses. The pace of change was wearing for many, although students and staff at Cathedral faced the new challenges with confidence and good humour.

Cathedral Catholic School entered the "information age" in the 1990s. The Internet and a school website introduced the world to Cathedral students and Cathedral students to the world. On December 20, 2000, Alfie Sicoli received a phone call from the Vatican Radio Station in Rome. Ms. Ibli, a radio broadcaster from Vatican Radio told Mr. Sicoli that she found Cathedral's website while surfing the Internet and asked him if he would agree to being interviewed the next day, on her Vatican Radio program to discuss how children at Cathedral Catholic School were celebrating Advent. The interview was broadcast live on Vatican Radio in Rome, Italy on the morning of December 21, 2000.

Fifty years after the opening of Cathedral's "new" building, and 130 years after the construction of the first Catholic school on the site, we are half-way through the first decade of a new millennium. After a brief period of panic, standardized provincial testing has become an accepted part of education. The challenges of a jam-packed curriculum are being faced with confidence. Complex social and family issues are dealt with on a daily basis.

What stands out at Cathedral Catholic School? "We're a real family," says one teacher. Students are comfortable with teachers, parents are engaged with the school community, and the important ties between Cathedral Catholic School and the Cathedral faith community are strong. The positive emotional ties are evidenced by the number of former students returning to visit. Cathedral remains very much a "neighborhood" school, even when many of those neighbors arrive by school bus from considerable distances. Whatever the challenges ahead, the positive attitude and strength that has made Cathedral a success for 130 years can be counted on to continue to provide a cherished and faith-filled educational experience for Pembroke's children.



Taylor Bissonette at the ribbon cutting marking the opening of the new playground installation in 2003.



Above, in 2002 Cathedral students participated in Bishop Smith Catholic High's production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*, along with students from other elementary schools in the Catholic Board.

Right, Principal Alfie Sicoli and long-time school secretary Jean McConeghy celebrate Hallowe'en 1999 with student Nakia Ouellette.



Thanks and Acknowledgements

We extend a warm thank you to the following people and groups who have made this celebration possible:

- Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd., Chalk River Laboratories
- Balloons of the Valley, and Nicole Godin
- Cathedral Catholic School Association, past & present
- Custom Printers of Renfrew
- CWL of St. Columbkille's Cathedral
- Demers Masonry
- Fun 'n' Fashion, and Lisa Levean
- Hebert Screen Printing and Trophies
- The Knights of Columbus, Council 1531
- The New RO
- Pappin Communications
- The Pembroke Antique Car Club
- Pembroke City Police
- Renfrew County Roman Catholic District School Board
- The students and staff of Cathedral Catholic School

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of the present and former students and staff members who contributed their time and treasured memories in the production of this history.

Cecelia Cotnam, Wendy Donahue, Sheila Farrell, Kay Garrard, Tim Houlihan, Pat Hunt, Gerard Lynch, Jean McConeghy, Mike McFarlane, Almira McGuire, Kelly O'Grady, Mary Olsheski, Joan Park, Geraldine Pappin, Mary Price, Margaret Rabishaw, Joseph St. Amand, Alfie Sicoli, Father Pat Tait, Father Murray Tardiff, and Lynn Urlocker.



Grade 8 Graduates, 1966



A Message from the Director of Education

The opening words of our vision statement, "inspired by our rich heritage and challenged by the struggles of our past", seem to capture succinctly the essence of Cathedral's Catholic School story.

There is a long and proud history of Catholic education associated with Cathedral Catholic School – the birthplace of Catholic education in the City of Pembroke. With this 50th celebration, our parents and their students can be assured of a continuation of that tradition for the foreseeable future.

Congratulations are extended to all those who have been involved in the planning, development and implementation of this most important anniversary. Your energy and enthusiasm are reflected on a daily basis here at the school. The wonderful talents of our Cathedral staff will certainly be highlighted during this golden jubilee year.

To all of our clergy, staff, students and parents, past and present, prayerful best wishes and thank you for your dedicated and superior efforts these past "50" years!

Lorne Keon,
Director of Education

