

**St. Stephen's Church
407 Milltown Blvd.
St. Stephen, New Brunswick**



Parish History

Revised July 2005

The Parish of Milltown, County of Charlotte, under the patronal title of "St. Stephen", is situated on the upper stretches of the Saint Croix River above the rapids which the aboriginal people of these parts called "Scoodic".

The earliest records of the parish date from November 1, 1838, with the arrival of the first pastor, Rev. John Cummings. Father Cummings began making missionary trips from St. Andrews to serve the Irish immigrant families prior to moving here on a permanent basis. The first church, which stood at the present location and built under his direction at that time, was a smaller replica of the present church. In the short time of only twenty-five years however, it was considered extremely old fashioned, and "entirely wanting in that internal and external beauty, so pleasing to the eye, even in church architecture".

Father Cummings also built the first rectory in 1841-42. The records show that the first parish marriage recorded was between Thomas Costello and Mary Caughlin in 1838. Later in December of the same year, Charles Donovan became the first person to be named in the baptismal records. Father Cummings died in 1849 and was buried in Milltown, behind the church he had erected and loved. His remains were later moved to the Milltown Catholic Cemetery, where he rests beside the eloquent and polished speaker, Father Wallace.

In March 1849, Rev. M.A. Wallace, came to the parish from St. Andrews, but remained only a short time, being replaced by Rev. J. O'Donnell. He was succeeded in 1852 by Rev. John Force, S.J.

In 1853 Rt. Rev. Thomas Connolly was named pastor and remained until November 1854, when he was succeeded by Rev. James Quinn, who came from the Church of the Assumption. Father Quinn started a school in the original building of what is now St. Patrick's Hall. This was the first Catholic School started in the area. The teacher of this school was Mr. John McGarrigle who lived with his family beside the present day church. (Mr. McGarrigle still has direct descendants in the St. Croix Valley). This school was the sole means of education for many children until 1879 when, as a result of a government act, the New Brunswick Federal School Act of 1870, the children attended Milltown Public School.

In November 1862, Rev. E.J. Dunphy replaced Father Quinn as pastor of St. Stephen's Parish in Milltown. By the spring of 1863 this energetic devoted priest developed plans for the erection of a new church, since the older church was already dilapidated and out of date. With many pleasing reminiscences of the past, the old church was torn down from its foundation and was replaced with a handsome, spacious building. In 1863 the present church was built under the direction of Father Dunphy and solemnly blessed by Bishop Sweeney and assisted by Father Dunphy on July 31, 1864. Later that same year the erection and blessing of the Stations of the Cross took place with Father Dunphy officiating. The total cost of the present church was \$12,658.47 in U.S. currency. The average value of the U.S. dollar at that time was \$.50 on the Provincial dollar – Canada was not yet a country. Of this church, M.A. Mannary, who was the biographer of Rev. E.J. Dunphy, says "As you approach Milltown from St. Stephen, the eye of the tourist is attracted by the handsome, well proportioned spire of a well finished church nestling in as beautiful a spot as you will perhaps find in the Province of New Brunswick. It is situated in the midst of a verdant and carefully tended lawn and is a credit to the place and an honor to the Catholics of the Community". The building is 1043 feet by 66 feet. The height from the floor to the roof is 44 feet and to the top of the pinnacle is 83 feet. The church is erected in the Gothic style of architecture and the plans for its erection were furnished by Mr. Matthew Stead of Saint John. The church has a seating capacity of 500 people. The aisles are large, spacious, and roomy and the beautiful stained glass windows on either side, with those in the front and rear, go to make up a beautiful church which is finished in fine workmanship.

Stain Glass Windows and Statues: The windows in the sanctuary were donated by individual parishioners. The Central window depicts St. Stephen being stoned to death, The first Christian martyr and the patron saint of the parish. The two bottom center panels are windows dedicated to Jesus and Mary. The top left window is "The Annunciation". Beneath it is "The Birth of Jesus". The right top window depicts "The Meeting in the Temple" and below it is "The Crucifixion." The statues are from the left to right: St. Patrick, St. Bridget, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Claire. Statues of Mary and Joseph decorate the two side altars in the sanctuary.

Not only did Father Dunphy build a beautiful church, but his stay in Milltown had many other good results. He employed the best teachers and, under the musical direction of Father Dunphy and Mr. Bowers, St. Cecilia's Choir Society was incorporated. Father Dunphy also arranged the first parish picnic. The day appointed for the picnic was August 28, 1863. The place was Timothy Crocker's "Fairy Island", two or three miles from St. Stephen on what is now known as the Ledge Road. This island, stubbed with trees and foliage, gave ample protection from the hot rays of the midsummer sun. Opposite this tiny island in the St. Croix River was the smart, bustling American city of Calais. The children with their Sunday School teachers, the older folk and even travelers from Carleton walked with bright eyes and happy childish faces on their way to the picnic. Upon entering the party area the sweet strains of the St. Stephen Coronet Band could be heard. The usual picnic games and sports were played, with all receiving a cordial welcome. Father Dunphy not only raised money for the new church but he brought the people together as friends. Both the British and American flags flew proudly that day.

In June 1867 Father Dunphy was recalled to the Church of the Assumption. At that time a St. Stephen newspaper man said, "On the departure of Father Dunphy from our midst, it is befitting that we should make some acknowledgement of the worth and services of a man who performed so much in a brief space of time for the good of those with whom he was most intimately connected, and through them in no small degree benefited the general public". Father Quinn, a former pastor, returned to the parish to replace Father Dunphy and remained until his death on July 18, 1885. Father Quinn was succeeded by his curate, Rev. Francis Bradley, who remained pastor until August 1886.

Up until 1887 the towns of St. Stephen, Milltown and surrounding areas were all included in the St. Stephen's Parish Church located at Milltown. In 1887 the town of St. Stephen was detached from the Parish Church at Milltown and "Holy Rosary Parish" was incorporated.

In September of 1886 Father Bradley was replaced by Rev. E. Doyle who was transferred from St. George to Milltown. Shortly after his arrival the old rectory burned and the following summer the present residence was built. Father Doyle was respected for his education and intelligent mind, as well as being a strict disciplinarian. In 1888, in a

large impressive ceremony with many civil and religious representatives present, Father Doyle celebrated a Solemn High Mass commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Catholic Church in Milltown. Bishop Sweeney sent his regrets the following day (November 7th) as he could not attend. Father Doyle's stay in Milltown was a fruitful one in other ways as well.

Pipe Organ: The pipe organ, a gift from Father Doyle, was installed in 1915 and is still in use today. Replacement cost is estimated at \$350,000.00.

On April 25, 1915, the Mass of Bateman was sung with a large congregation attending. Playing the new organ was Mrs. J.E. Osborne, assisted by Mrs. McDermott and a large choir. Father Doyle celebrated his golden jubilee on July 12, 1915 and the next year in 1916 was raised to the rank of Monsignor at the instance of the late Most Rev. E.A. LeBlanc. Father Doyle died on March 28, 1916, having served as pastor for 30 years.

In November 1917, Rev. A.W. Meahan was named to succeed Msgr. Doyle as pastor of St. Stephen's Church-Milltown. Father Meahan brought about many significant changes. Up to this time a number of wood stoves throughout the church served as the only means of heating, with their dingy, dirty pipes reaching toward the ceiling. Father Meahan had the stoves removed and a furnace installed that supplied central heating to the church. The chimney was erected inside the church and was, of course, disliked by many parishioners because of its unsightly, unpainted appearance; it also took up a great deal of space. In August of 1919 Father Meahan was appointed to St. John the Baptist Parish, and was succeeded by Rev. M.T. Murphy. Father Murphy had the interior chimney relocated to the exterior of the building and renovated the church in 1922 and in 1925.

Interior Decorations: The interior decoration of the church was done by T.X. Renaud (1860-1946), an artist from Montreal. Mr. Renaud is credited with painting the interior of over 200 churches in Canada and the United States, including St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal.

In 1926 Father Murphy was succeeded by Rt. Rev. Charles P.J. Carleton as the new pastor. Up to this time kerosene lamps had been used in the church. Msgr. Carleton had electric lights installed, to replace the kerosene and arc lamps. Msgr. Carleton was invested a Domestic Prelate on November 19, 1947. Rev. Joseph C. Floyd was the assistant priest.

In 1949 Msgr. Carleton was succeeded by Rev. Michael O'Brien. Father O'Brien had a beautiful new floor laid and the pews arranged in a more suitable manner. For many years Father O'Brien laboured ceaselessly to better his parish both spiritually and morally. Father O'Brien was invested a Domestic Prelate during his years in Milltown. In 1964 Msgr. O'Brien retired from active ministry and was succeeded by Rev. J. Arthur Burns. Father Burns had the task of interpreting the many changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council. The altar and many other external features of the church are now more beautiful than ever.

"This house of God has welcomed worshipers for one hundred years or more
Commemorative Plaque....Canada's Centennial Year 1867-1967

In September 1974 Rev. Joseph F. Daley succeeded Father Burns and was pastor for six years until he was replaced by Rev. John R. Glaspy in September 1980. Father Glaspy remained as pastor for seven years and was succeeded by Rev. J. Patrick Magee in August 1987. Father Francis McCormack, after being appointed pastor in 1993, was transferred to the Miramichi in 1995. Father Peter Bagley, who at the time was pastor of Holy Rosary Church, also took on the position as pastor of St. Stephen's Church-Milltown. The added responsibility of one parish priest being pastor of both St. Stephen's Church-Milltown and Holy Rosary Church was brought about because of the decreasing number of priests available to serve at a time which followed a period of growth in the number of new parish churches in the Diocese of Saint John. Father Peter Bagley was pastor of St. Stephen's Church-Milltown for four years until he was succeeded in July 1999 by Rev. Peter J. Stephen until July 2002. Father Paul Riley currently serves as pastor of both Holy Rosary Church and St. Stephen's Church-Milltown. The main office for both parishes is operated from the former Holy Rosary Rectory with

the St. Stephen's-Milltown Rectory used as the pastor's place of residence.

During the early part of Jubilee year 2000, restoration work included: a new ceiling for the 20 center ceiling panels, a new ceiling for the main entrance beneath the choir loft, new surfaces for the two side walls of the sanctuary, repainting the lower half of the main body of the church, and improved lighting and restoration for the two sacristies on each side of the sanctuary. The main altar, pulpit and baptismal font were also repainted and the six high altar candle stands were restored and returned to the sanctuary. Further interior restoration work is planned for the future as the parish of St. Stephen's Church-Milltown carries on with determination in their faithfulness and devotion to God, and love for their community.