



Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall

This Week in History

September 21, 2015

St. Finnan's: From Mission to Cathedral

Cathedral (French: cathédrale from Latin: cathedra, "seat" from the Greek kathedra (καθέδρα): seat, bench, from kata "down" + hedra seat, base, chair) is a Catholic church which contains the seat of a bishop, thus serving as the central church of a diocese, conference, or episcopate. (Wikipedia)



During the early 1800s, more Highland families were moving to what is now the Alexandria area. However, because of the distance (remember this was almost 200 years ago) and a lack of roads they were quite isolated from their parish church in St. Raphael's. So in 1832, the bishop of Upper Canada, Alexander Macdonell, agreed to the idea of establishing the Mission of Alexandria and he provided the services of the assistant priest of St. Raphael's, Rev. John MacDonald. Construction began that year and the first Mass in this new church was celebrated on Christmas Day 1833. Seven years later, St. Finnan's was raised to the status of parish.



In 1879, Father Alexander Macdonell was transferred from St. Alexander's in Lochiel, to St. Finnan's. By now the increasing population of Alexandria had outgrown the original church building. Father Alexander was tasked with overseeing the construction of a larger church. Father Macdonell, with the full support of his people, set out to complete this objective, with the new building to be built on the site of the first church. On **September 22, 1883**, the building contract was awarded to Messrs. John R. Chisholm & Son of Lochiel. On March 15, 1885, final construction was completed and the church was dedicated to the Worship of God by Bishop James Cleary.



On October 28, 1890, Father Alexander Macdonell was ordained the first bishop of the newly created Diocese of Alexandria and St. Finnan's became the Cathedral Parish.

Today under the supervision of Father Kelvin Maloney, VG, this beautiful majestic church continues to serve as our cathedral.

