

St. Dunstan's Church – Two Hundredth Anniversary



The first St. Dunstan's Church was built on the existing location of the Basilica in 1816. Thus in 2016 we celebrate the 200th anniversary of a St. Dunstan's Parish in Charlottetown. This initial structure was a modest wooden building 30'x40' and was named after St. Dunstan of Canterbury in England by the Quebec Bishop of the day.

In 1929 the Diocese of Charlottetown was established and thus this small St. Dunstan's church automatically became a cathedral. Bishop Angus MacEachern, our first bishop, celebrated his installation ceremony in his "little cathedral." As the community of Charlottetown continued to grow it was necessary to enlarge this first structure. This was accomplished in the early 1830's.

In 1874 a brand new wooden church was completed on the same site. It was stated to be "one of the finest" churches on the Island at that time. The former church had been moved to a nearby lot and was used as a school for a number of years. This larger church building served the St. Dunstan's Parish community for almost 60 years.

Once again the community of Charlottetown was growing and talk began about building a brand new grander cathedral for the Diocese. Because of lack of funds, construction was accomplished gradually over a ten-year period. It was in 1907 that this beautiful if not magnificent stone cathedral was opened for worship.

Unfortunately, six years later, in 1913, disaster struck and the new stone cathedral burned to the ground on a Friday night during Lent. With the help of insurance funds, an even more beautiful structure was commenced and ultimately completed in 1919, approximately six and a half years after the fire. This structure was slightly larger than the original stone cathedral with the sacristy being added to the end of the building rather than being situated in the basement. This is the magnificent Basilica that we use and celebrate today. And in a few short years (in 2019) it will be a

grand 100 years old. Clearly the church and cathedral of St. Dunstan's in Charlottetown lives on.