

Fr. Louis Boué

His Arrival and Early Development Of The Church In Amherstburg



In July, 1843 the Jesuits, headed by Rev Pierre Point, returned to Assumption after an absence of over sixty years. For about four months, the good Fathers also tended to the mission at Amherstburg until the arrival in January, 1844 of Fr. Louis Boué, a secular priest, and native of France. Fr. Point, in a letter dated May 10, 1844 to his Superior in France related that "... Monsignor had left us on an interim basis with the parish or mission of Amherstburg; but about four months after our arrival, we were discharged. We were on the 12TH of January, just prior to the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, when entered our home an unknown priest. He was Monsieur Boué, a French missionary who arrived from Montreal to administer this Amherstburg parish. He was very bruised from a fall he had suffered coming from London in a stagecoach, which was in very poor condition. Our joy was great, but the welcome he received did not nonetheless make him forget this suffering. He is a holy priest, full of zeal for the Glory of God and love for us ...'

Rev Louis Boué, "Honorary Canon" of the Diocese of Lyons, France was born in that district in 1794. He became pastor of St Michael's Church in Convent, Diocese of New Orleans Louisiana, in April, 1834.. After six years there and taking a leave of absence, Boué revisited his homeland. He then traveled to Rome, returned to France and in May, 1842 came to Canada with his Jesuit friends, offering himself for employment in the Diocese of Toronto.

There was a new church to be built in Amherstburg. The 1800 frame chapel on Bathurst Street was far too small to hold the ever-increasing congregation Bishop Power was seeking an energetic and dedicated pastor to carry out that monumental task. On the 9TH of January, 1844 Rev Louis Boué was placed temporarily in charge of the Amherstburg parish. The appointment was made permanent January 29TH when Bishop Power received permission from the Bishop of New Orleans to hire the former pastor of St Michael's from Convent Louisiana.

Fr Boué's arrival at Sandwich in a battered condition apparently did little to deter him from immediately getting on with the business at hand. On the 16TH of January, 1844, less than a week after his arrival here the new pastor signed the church register for the first time. Newcomers were arriving in the district on a regular basis. Much of the area was newly settled by Catholic farmers who had only recently come from Quebec, as land opened up here. The cornerstone of the new church was blessed on June 24TH, 1844. Even though the contractor, William Burnell, had agreed to build the church for \$9,200 the final price after some additional work was \$9,728.

Fr. Boué spent many days travelling about the district, meeting parishioners from the whole section. Some of whom hadn't seen a priest since they left their homeland. On some occasions the new pastor baptized several children in a family at one time. On his visits he kept the populace informed as to the progress of their new church. Fr Boué maintained a ledger of promises and payments as

parishioners donated to the building fund as they were each able - some fifty cents, some fifty dollar. A number of Protestant citizens and merchants also donated to the building of the new Catholic Church on Brock Street. The Wyandotte Indians had donated stone for the new edifice from their quarry in Anderdon Township. Men of the vicinity gave day work, loaned horses, wagons, tools, and assisting in whatever manner they were able to build the new St. John The Baptist Church.

The Death of Fr. Louis Boué



Fr. Loue Boué passed away the 11th of October, 1845. According to Bishop Dignan's history of the London Diocese. Fr. Boué's death occurred as a result of injuries sustained whilst inspecting his new church. "It seems that the walls of the building had just been completed, and in his eagerness to catch a view of the walls from a far distance, the Reverend Fr. stood up in his buggy whilst returning from a visit to the countryside. His horse frightened by something, lurched forward, precipitating Fr. Boué to the ground. His injuries were so serious that death followed in a few days".

Fr. Louis Boué was buried on the 14th of October, 1845 beneath the Sanctuary, his being the first funeral held in the new Amherstburg church. Officiating at the requiem Mass were Jesuit Fathers Pierre Point and James Jaffre from Assumption and Fr. Kilroy from the Irish parish in Detroit. Burial took place "in the presence of all the parishioners and others from a distance" and was witnessed by "marguilliers" (church wardens) of the church.

Sometime after his death a large plaque in Fr. Boué's memory was installed on the North wall of the interior of St. John the Baptist Church, where it remained until major renovations took place in 1987-1988. The plaque was removed at that time and re-installed in 1991. It read the following...

"La repose sous l'entrée de ce sanctuaire le corps du Rev'd Mr Louis Boué, Canoine H're De La Cathedrale Du Puy, missionnaire, cure de cette eglise batie par son zele. Décédé 11 e XI October 1845, agé 53 ans.

CHERI DE DIEU, CHERI DES HOMMES!! SA MEMOIRE ES EN BENEDICTION.
RIP."

Work on the church continued after Fr Boué's death. The addition of the bell tower was directed by Basilian Fr. Pierre Dominic Laurent in 1860. Two stained glass windows were imported from Belgium in 1883, followed by eight more in 1894, and the rest in the early 900's.

In 1918, extensive excavations beneath the church were necessary so that a new heating plant could be installed. Fr. Boué's remains were removed and interred in the present St. John the Baptist cemetery. In 1991, the Historical committee of St. John the Baptist parish, seeing that the tombstone over Fr. Boué's burial site was badly deteriorated, they arranged for a new stone to be placed there.

In October 1991, one hundred and forty-six years after Fr Louis Boué's death, the new Monument was installed and dedicated. On a chilly Sunday afternoon Fr. Ed Kline blessed the gravesite and shared appropriate prayers with a goodly number of parishioners in attendance. The Knights of Columbus Fourth Degree Dean Wagner assembly added pomp and colour to the ceremony. The Amherstburg Knights of Columbus Fr Bernard O'Donnell Council graciously financed the \$1045 project in 2004. The Bell Tower was repaired along with the Nave Roof framing at a cost of 2.3 million dollars.

Fr. Louis Boué Assembly #2355

On July 30th, 1994, a Charter was granted to the Fr Louis Boué Assembly #2355 Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus. The membership of the Assembly is primarily made up from members of Councils from Amherstburg, River Canard, McGregor, Harrow and Kingsville. The Fr. Louis Boué Assembly hosted the 23RD Exemplification in the Cardinal McGuigan Province of the 5TH Ontario District, on September 28TH, 2002, under the leadership of Faithful Navigator and Committee Chairperson, Sir Knight Robin Beaune. Fr Louis Boué Assembly hosted the 33RD Exemplification in the Cardinal McGuigan Province of the 5TH Ontario District, on June 4TH, 2011, under the leadership of Faithful Navigator and Committee Chairperson, Sir Knight David Gelin.