

Potton: Yours to discover The Religious Heritage of Potton



Anglican Church, Mansonville



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The religious heritage of Potton

The religious heritage of the Township of Potton is richly diverse, and begins with the native traditions of the Abenaki who once hunted and fished here. Our Loyalist settlers were primarily Protestant. Their first houses of worship were called « Union meeting houses ». These were built by the community for use by any denomination whenever a preacher visited. In the mid 1800's, as French Canadian families began to settle here, the Catholic Church grew, and now forms the largest denomination in Potton. European immigrants of the 1950's eventually established their religious tradition bearing the orthodox stamp of Eastern Europe.

The Abenaki

The Abenaki came here from the New England region around 1660. These natives revered Owl's Head Mountain, calling it Kokokas, or the Owl. The Abenaki, guided by the shaman man-owl, practiced traditional spirit ceremonies in the natural chamber located near the summit of Owl's Head. They believed that a fierce serpent called Anaconda lived deep in Memphremagog at the foot of the Owl, and protected this sacred place.



Baptist Church, Mansonville

The Baptist influence

Around 1809, a building was erected at Meig's Corner to serve as a meeting hall and as the first, and only school in Potton for 20 years! The Female Benevolent Society was founded on May 22, 1826, at the suggestion of Gardner Bartlett, an earnest young Baptist student and teacher in the school. In 1844, this Society that provided for the less fortunate, also built a Union meeting house, known as the Chapel, in Meig's Corner. It was located adjacent to the Chapel cemetery. In 1835, the Baptists of Potton became a separate organization with Rev. T. Merriman as pastor. The Society closed its books in 1848.

The Methodists used the Chapel for worship until 1856. When the Baptists sold their building in Mansonville to the Anglicans in 1856, the Chapel was used by that sect until completion of their Church in 1891. The Chapel no longer exists.

The Baptist Church, a simple wooden structure, is distinguished by its gothic-inspired entrance and single window in the building's facade. Four arches decorate the bell tower that once held the Church bell.

The Anglican influence

In 1856, Rev. J. Godden was sent as a missionary to serve Potton's Anglican community. They bought the Baptist's meeting house in Mansonville and used it for worship until 1902, when St. Paul's Anglican Church was built on the site. Wealthy local residents such as David A. Manson, founder of St. John's Masonic Lodge no. 27, contributed largely to its construction. Elements symbolic to the Masonic Order are found throughout the building. St. Paul's Church is gothic in design, sheathed in brick, with shingles and louvres on the bell tower, once crowned by a spire and cross. Light filters through arched stained glass windows donated by the Boright, Manson and Perkins families. The oculus of St. Paul's is of a unique trefoil design, further enhancing this lovely building.

Around 1876, an Anglican church was also built in Dunkin. It was subsequently used as a school from 1923 to 1951, then sold, and is now preserved as a private residence.

The Methodist influence (United Church)

Methodists were firmly established in Potton, when the United Church of Canada was founded in 1925, with the merger of Congregationalist, Methodist and most Presbyterian Church congregations. Early congregations here were served by itinerant circuit riders, commonly called « Saddlebag Preachers ». Roswell Bourn, a converted Methodist, is thought to be the first of these to come to Potton around 1803.

The Mansonville Methodist Mission was established in 1873. The first Methodist Church was built in Mansonville in 1879 and destroyed by fire in 1893. The present building, the United Church, replaced it in 1894. A simple rose window, adorning the centre facade, distinguishes the building. It is the only one in Potton where a sloped floor forms amphitheatre seating.

The Jones School # 12, built in 1865 in Vale Perkins, was acquired in 1949 by the United Church, closed in 1960, and used only seasonally until 2006. Both United Church buildings were sold to private interests in 2011.



United Church, Mansonville

The Evangelical Second Advent Church

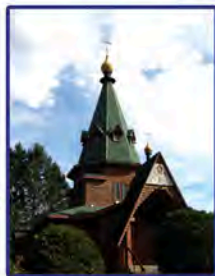
The Evangelical Second Advent Church in Dunkin opened on April 24, 1880 with Elder B.S. Reynolds as Pastor. In 1910, the 59th Annual Conference of the Evangelical Second Advent Church of Quebec and Vermont assembled in the little church. Although the Adventists were very active during this period, the Baptists and the Methodists also used the Advent building. The Advent Church was known as Dunkin Union Church when it closed in 1960. The building, now privately owned, is still standing.

The Catholic Church

Priests from nearby parishes served the Catholic mission in 1866. After the installation of the first resident priest, Pierre Mathieu, a Church was opened on rue Principale in 1880. The Saint-Cajetan Parish was established by canonical decree in 1890. A larger Church was built in 1919 that was destroyed by fire on March 17, 1950. The present Saint-Cajetan Church replaced it soon after. The building's size, spire, bell tower, and majestic entrance doors distinguish this modernistic building designed by Denis Tremblay.

The Eastern Rite Ukrainian Church

Not far from Vale Perkins on chemin du Lac, sits the tiny St. John the Baptist Chapel, an Eastern rite Ukrainian Catholic Church built in 1954 and enlarged in 1985. Its construction is reminiscent of wooden churches in the Carpathian region of Ukraine. Both the bell tower and the Chapel are wood, ornately decorated, with distinctive roofs. A tiny octagonal tower crowned by a small dome and cross rises above the central cupola of the Chapel, which is now privately owned.



*Holy Transfiguration
Chapel*

The Russian Orthodox Church in exile

The Holy Transfiguration monastery, in the Byzantine style of northern Russia, is located on chemin du Monastère. It was built from 1974 to 1979, under the direction of Monseigneur Vitaly Oustinov and of Archpriest Sergei Petroff. A distinctive gold bulb tops the Church. With the death of resident Archpriest Petroff, the monastery and chapel are now seldom used, though visitors may visit the grounds and cemetery located there.

The cemeteries

There are 19 cemeteries in Potton, with the largest of these being the Mansonville Protestant Cemetery. Our Catholic cemetery faces it. The Ruiter Settlement Cemetery is the oldest in Potton, and resting place of Jacob Ruiter, who died of smallpox in 1797, at age two. Sixteen other cemeteries dot the Township.

Potton is a welcoming community, marked by the cooperation instilled by diverse belief as its religious heritage attests.

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