



Preserving, promoting and developing Wellington North's unique cultural resources to build a vibrant community and a prosperous economy.

February's Cultural Moment celebrates Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto



Photo: Fred Dahms

The present-day Sacred Heart Church in Kenilworth was built to replace the original building in 1903. The cost was just under \$10,000.00, with many parishioners contributing their work. The rectory and a driving shed were built at the same time. Many improvements were added over the decades, initiated by the various priests. The interior decoration of the church was completed in 1952.

In 1953, the year Pope Pius XII declared 1954 as a Marian Year, Sacred Heart's priest, Father Beck, initiated the planting of 5000 pine trees around the property.

By 1960, Father Wubbels (called Father "Francis"), was inspired by the beauty of the impressive stand of trees. He encouraged the Holy Name Society men to build a shrine in the grove behind the church. He chose to honour Our Lady of Lourdes, after the shrine to Mary in France.

All the parishioners contributed to the beautification of the spot chosen for the Grotto. The men of the parish did all the labour, including Joseph Murphy, who created the stonework. They chose marble for the altar and set up 200 seats with flood lights. Included are Stations of the Cross and Mount Calvary.

In June 1961 the Grotto was blessed by Bishop Ryan of the Hamilton Diocese. Its continuing existence is a tribute to the dedication of the parishioners and priests of Sacred Heart Church.

Throughout its nearly 60 years, the Grotto has been a place of prayer and reflection for thousands of passersby and parishioners. The Grotto's sign beside Highway 6 and its beautiful natural entrance continue to offer a welcome respite from everyday cares.

Submitted by Gail Donald Wellington North Cultural Roundtable