



Durham Catholic District School Board



St. Hedwig Catholic School



In the Beginning

St. Hedwig Roman Catholic Church was built in 1954 and was the centrepiece of the Polish community in Oshawa. Next to the church was the convent, and across from these buildings was the school. All this was built after the arrival of Polish immigrants after the Second World War.

The Felician Sisters had a huge impact and presence in the Polish community and in the Catholic schools. In September 1958, 200 students were enrolled in the newly constructed eight-room St. Hedwig elementary school, which employed several Felician Sisters who lived in the neighbouring convent.



J. Douglas Miller, the builder and general contractor charged with erecting the first section of St. Hedwig Catholic School, hands over the keys to Sister Mary Rachel, the first principal.

L to R: Mr. George Tonks, architect; Father Mislag Stanley, assistant pastor at St. Hedwig Church; Albert Love, business administrator at what was then called the Oshawa Separate School Board; Sister Rachel; Mr. Miller; Father F. Kwiatkowski, pastor of St. Hedwig; Michael Rudka, chairman of the property committee of the Board; and Edward J. Finan, inspector of Separate Schools in Oshawa.

The school was built to serve the needs of the growing Polish community in the Ritson Rd. and Olive Ave. area of Oshawa. The original structure housed six classrooms, washrooms, a staff room and office space. The school and St. Hedwig Catholic Church, founded three years earlier in 1955, stand side by side and have served the educational and spiritual needs of not only the Oshawa Polish community, but many from across Durham Region as well. Prior to the construction of school and church, the Polish community used facilities at St. Gregory the Great Catholic Church in north Oshawa to conduct its Heritage Language School on Saturdays. (This program transferred to St. Hedwig Catholic School in September 1981.)

By April 1960, overcrowding necessitated the construction of four more classrooms, washrooms and office space for the school secretary. This addition quickly became known as “the 37-day wonder,” a reference to the speed at which the construction was completed. In January 1959, St. Hedwig housed nearly 400 students. St. Hedwig C.S. would be transformed once again in November 1996, when the addition of a gymnasium and further enlarging of the office took place. Construction of the gymnasium removed the baseball diamond and all remaining grass from the campus, leaving the play area almost entirely paved.

In 2010, with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) pending, St. Hedwig C.S. received a number of upgrades in a summer construction project that saw doorways widened, the main entrance shifted to the east doors on LaSalle Avenue, and provisions to be able to lock the school down put into place. Additional fencing completely enclosed the schoolyard.

The summer of 2012 saw another renovation, this time to accommodate the Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) program, which will be in its third year of existence at the school. Provisions included a separate fenced play area for the class as well as a vestibule, washrooms and a separate entrance on the school’s east side.

Celebrations of the Arts

Celebrations of the Arts were significant in the history of St. Hedwig Catholic School. Many dramatic presentations and choir activities were performed at the school, in the church and throughout Oshawa.



The choir from 1966, led by Sister Regina Marie and kindergarten teacher Elizabeth Woods.

The St. Hedwig Catholic School community formally celebrated anniversaries in the autumn of 1993 (35th) and in the spring of 2008 (50th).

On June 12, 2008, St. Hedwig Catholic School celebrated 50 Years Together. Many former staff and students attended the celebration. They had the opportunity to come together at St. Hedwig Church to celebrate Mass and then go to the school to look at photos, chat with friends from long ago, and walk the halls of their wonderful school one more time.

After doing some research, one of St. Hedwig Catholic School's former students summed up the history of St. Hedwig and the Oshawa community for a "Local Look Back" writing assignment.

My community goes back a long way, and so does my school. My school, St. Hedwig, was built in 1958, contracted by Douglas Miller and architecture by George C.N. Tonks. St. Hedwig Catholic School was named after a Saint called St. Hedwig. In Polish she was called St. Jadwiga. She was born in 1174 and later died in 1243. Her feast day is on October 16.

The parish church just across the street is called St. Hedwig Church. It was built in 1952. The first priest there was named Father Krita. The first principal of our school was Sister Mary Rachel Krauza. She was a Felician sister.

Our school has changed a fair amount since it was first made. The office in our school has changed, too. The office used to be in our photocopy room, but now it is in the front of the school. Also, the girls' and boys' washrooms used to be right where the office is now. In 1995, the gym was built, but before the gym was a grass field where the kids played. In 1959, when the school opened, there was a baseball diamond where kids could play.

In our school back in the 50s we had about 233 people who attended the school, but now there has been a significant change to our population. We now have a population of only 111 students! At our school back around the time it was built there were not many sports or activities around.

Although there was a popular event called the Glee Club. They use to dance, dress up and sing.

One famous place around our school was The Oshawa Bakery. The kids back then did not go out for lunch, as we do now. They didn't have the time or money. One big May special event that took place was the crowning of Mary. Some school rules back then were ... no fighting, no disrespect to teachers. Those rules are still the same at our school today. They really have not changed much. Some more school rules were the dress code, where you had to have approval by your parents and the school.

The school hours back then were different from ours. They were from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Now ours are 8:45 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. Something that changed our school was the Eastview Boys and Girls Club. That increased the school population because parents had a place for their kids to go to after school. That is because the Eastview had an after-school program for the children to attend. The Eastview Boys and Girls Club is in the same spot and still has after-school programs that students from St. Hedwig Catholic School attend to this day.

Overall, back then there were some differences, but honestly, from my perspective, there wasn't a whole lot that changed.

By Zack C. (Grade 8, 2011)

Today the school has a gym, library, office and a gated Kindergarten play area. The Heritage Language program still runs on Saturday mornings at the school, where students go to learn Polish. Father Stan is the parish priest. The school continues to foster communication between home, school and parish. Father Stan visits the school on many occasions and to take part in liturgical celebrations. The closeness of the church allows the students to walk to church once a month during the school year. Father Stan celebrates Mass and as a faith-filled school community we come together in prayer and thanksgiving.



St. Hedwig has that Yule spirit

Students at St. Hedwig Catholic School in Oshawa have shown the Christmas spirit this week through various activities at their Olive Avenue school. In top photo, Serina Cormier, left, and Mike Perris, both in Grade 8, decorate wax candles of Santa Claus. In photo at right, making candy are, left to right, Brett Lessard, Justin Pugelj and Krystyna Herc. The children made candles, candies, macaroni Christmas trees, did string art, baked gingerbread men and made banners urging peace and love and celebrating the birth of Christ.



Christmas activities



Happy Easter

Elizabeth Kalabis, 10, gets into the Easter spirit by putting some fancy decorations on an Easter egg. Kalabis was one of the Grade 5 students at St. Hedwig's School who got an opportunity to decorate Ukrainian eggs in class.

Decorating Easter eggs



First Holy Communion at St. Hedwig Church, 1980s

Prayer to St. Hedwig

All powerful God, may the prayers of St. Hedwig bring us your help and may her life of remarkable humility be an example to us all.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

You are cordially invited to attend a celebration in honour of 50 years of Catholic Education at

**St. Hedwig Catholic School
421 Olive Ave., Oshawa**

Thursday June 12, 2008
Mass 6:00 PM (at St. Hedwig Church)
Meet and Greet 7:00 PM-9:00 PM

R.S.V.P.
Jane.Pettersson@dcdsb.ca
or call (905) 728-5521 press "0"

Invitation with prayer for the school's 50th anniversary



Principal's Message

This is the first year there has been a Memory Book produced for the Teachers, Parents and Students of St. Hedwig's School.

I hope that many years from now that the Teachers, Parents and Students will be able to recall with fond memories their association with the school and their many rewarding experiences that they had during their school days.

A. ROUSSEAU
Principal

1978-79

Principal's Message, 1978–1979

Our Patron

St. Hedwig was a duchess and widow, the patroness of Silesia, a region of eastern Europe. Also called Jadwiga in some lists, Hedwig (1174–1243) died in a Cistercian convent, having taken vows. Hedwig was born in Andechs, Bavaria, Germany, the daughter of the Duke of Croatia and Dalmatia. She was the aunt of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. At the age of 12, Hedwig was married to Duke Henry of

Silesia, the head of the Polish Royal family. She bore him seven children, and they had a happy marriage. Henry founded a Cistercian convent at Trebnitz, as well as hospitals and monasteries. Henry died in 1238 and Hedwig became a Cistercian at Trebnitz. She had to leave her prayers to make peace among her offspring, and she buried a child who was killed fighting against the Mongols. She died in the convent on October 15. Many miracles were reported after her death, and she was canonized in 1266. Her feast day is October 16.

School Prayer

God of Wisdom,
We praise You and we Bless You.
You teach us Your ways.
May wisdom flow through our classrooms.
May compassion walk gently in our hallways.
May joy ring out in our playgrounds and gymnasium.
May words of integrity and justice be spoken in our
Office and our staff room.
By our joyful hope, let all know that St. Hedwig
Is God's school.
Amen.

Principals

The first six principals to lead the school were all Sisters from the Felician Order.

Sr. Mary Rachel Krauza (1958–1961)
Sr. Mary Emundine Aamczak (1961–1962)
Sr. Mary Pontianne Kubera (1962–1963)
Sr. Mary Edith Gawlinski (1963–1965)
Sr. Alexandrette Smith (1965–1966)
Sr. Regina Marie Necel (1967–1976)
Aime Rousseau (1976-1979)
Rudy Zamaraski (1979-1983)
Jim Cushing (1983-1989)
Nancy Drynan (September 1989)
John Nicholls (1989-1990)
John Arbour (1990-1991)
Lenore Barnard (1991-1994)
Brian Livett (1994-1999)
Kim Walsh (1999-2001)

Lynda Grinsky (2002-2003)
Doreen Lawrence (2004-2007)
Jerry Huxter (2008-2009)
Dave Laskey (2009-2012)
Andrew Oliver (2012-present)

Contributors:

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