



Doors Open Lambton County

A Participating Partner in Doors Open Ontario

❧ PETROLIA ❧

VICTORIAN ARCHITECTURE & WINDOWS
IN PLACES WE HAVE GATHERED



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2012
10 A.M. TO 4 P.M.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2012
1 P.M. TO 4 P.M.



∞ OUR CONTRIBUTORS ∞

Doors Open Lambton County celebrates the creativity that has been poured into our buildings. In Petrolia, we'd like to note that a lot of this same creativity is evident right here in our booklet.

We would like to extend a special thank you to our artists; Anne Marsh-Evans of Meaford, Ontario (formerly of Wyoming) and Ariel Lyons of Petrolia. They have generously permitted us to use their art to enhance our booklet. These works capture the buildings in ways no camera can.

Their drawings within these pages have been created over the decades and were two drawn as recently as this year. When we discovered that we needed a more up-to-date drawing of St. Philip's Catholic Church, Ms. Lyons grabbed her art supplies and created one. We also realized that we had no drawing of the Marthaville United Church at The Petrolia Discovery. Again, Ms. Lyons sprang to our rescue and drew the church.

We're saying a big "thank you" to Carol Graham too. Well-known in Petrolia for her skills as a photographer, playwright, theatre director, and tireless community organizer, she's also a whiz on the computer in graphic design. Waving her magic wand, she made our pieces all fit together nicely.

Our writing and research team unearthed so many new interesting stories that we all wanted more room in this booklet. Deep thanks to this enthusiastic bunch: Patricia McGee, Tom Walter, Jean Bradshaw, Norm Sutherland, Carolyn Gould and Liz Welsh. The staff at the Lambton Room were wonderfully helpful.

Last but not least, we give thanks to County of Lambton and Laurie Webb for making this booklet possible. ∞

WELCOME TO OUR DOORS OPEN

This year, we're proud to roll out the welcome mat for eight interesting Doors Open Lambton County sites in Petrolia. We're highlighting their Victorian architecture and windows, created in an era of superb craftsmanship with a fine appreciation of the arts.

Seven of the sites on our tour were built in those heady days as Petrolia grew to be the Oil Capital of Canada. The exception is Christ Church Anglican, which lost its Victorian church in a fire in 1957.

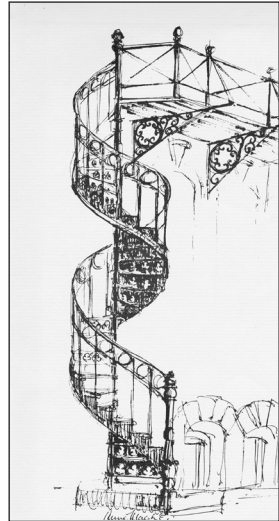
Our eight sites connect with each other in many ways and we certainly encourage everyone to see them all. Victoria Hall, St. Philip's Catholic Church and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church all employed the same architect, London's famous George F. Durand. (See *Page 6 story*.)

St. Paul's United Church and First Baptist Church share an architect as well. They were both designed by Isaac Erb, who was born in Thedford, Ontario and later set up an office in Port Huron, Michigan. He also designed the Oddfellows Hall at 4230 Petrolia Line, that is now Grandis Jewellers, and Green Gables at 4121 Lorne Street.

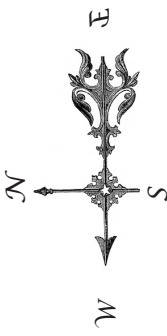
Victoria Hall and Christ Church Anglican are linked by their pride in displaying the windows by one of Canada's top stained glass artists, Christopher Wallis, of Grand Bend. (See *Page 7 story*.)

All our sites have roots and connections to Petrolia's oil heritage. Local gas once fuelled fireplaces at Nemo Hall and the chandelier of St. Paul's United Church. The wooden United Church at Petrolia Discovery came from the oil boom hamlet of Marthaville. First Baptist Church used to publish its own newspaper, *Oil from the Rock*. And Christ Anglican Church had in its parish Canada's largest oil refiner, Jacob Englehart, and oil producer, J.H. Fairbank.

Our doors are open and we have tales to tell. ❖



Anne Marsh-Evans



OUR 8 DOORS OPEN SITES

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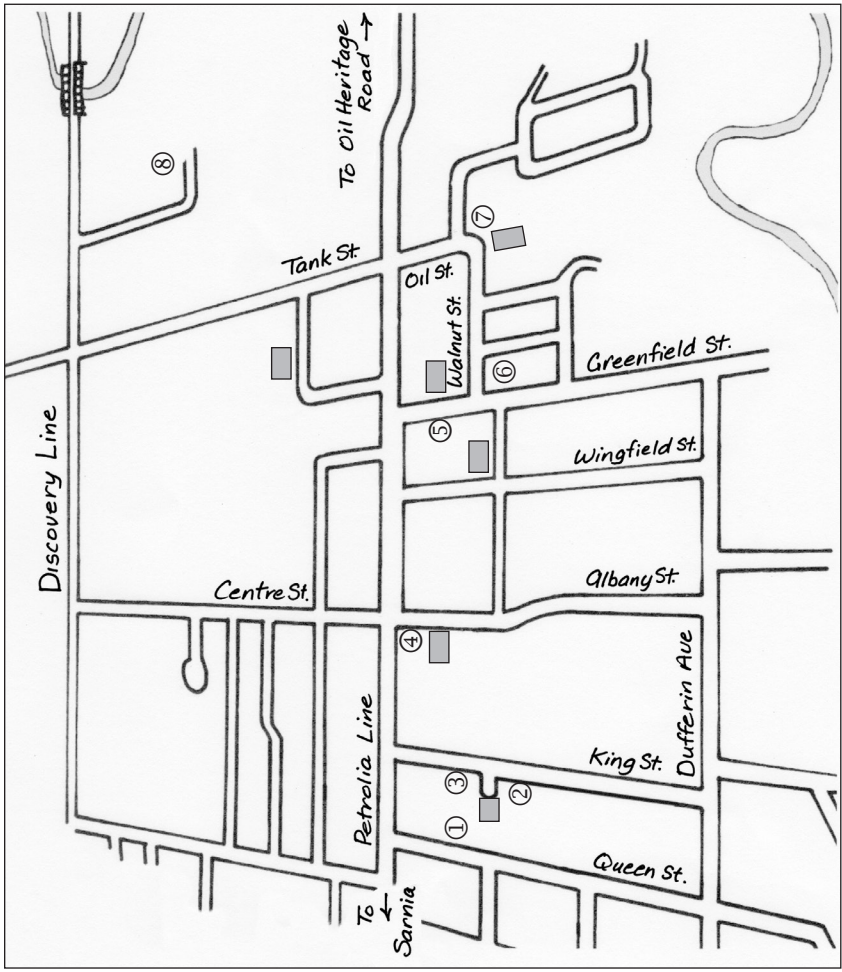


Parking

ONTARIO HERITAGE SITES:

- ②
- ⑤
- ⑦
- ⑧

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE: ⑤



Bernard Hendrickson

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TIMELINE OF OUR SITES

1878 Nemo Hall

1880 Marthaville United Church

- Moved from Marthaville to Petrolia Discovery in 2001.

1887 St. Philip's Catholic Church

- Replaces 1867 church on First Avenue which was moved to Bear Creek flats in 1873.

1889 Victoria Hall

- Replaces 1872 building on Petrolia Line at Fletcher Street which replaced the 1866 town hall on Pearl Street on the east end hill.

1890 St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

- Replaces 1873 church on Bear Creek flats which replaced the 1866 church on Pearl Street on the east end hill.

1897 First Baptist Church

- Replaces 1873 church on Bear Creek flats.

1900 St. Paul's United Church

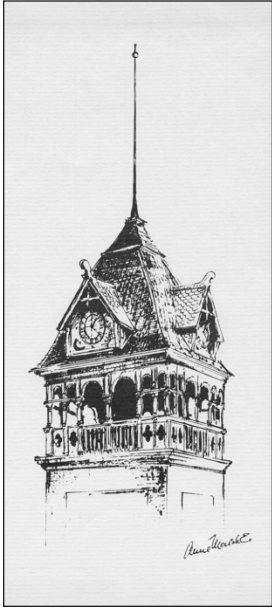
- Replaces the 1874 Wesleyan and Episcopal Methodist churches on the flats, which replaced the 1866 Wesleyan Church on Third Street.

1959 Christ Church Anglican

- Replaces 1882 church on same site, which replaced the 1872 wooden church on Railroad Street. ❖

ARCHITECTURE OF GEORGE F. DURAND

During his brief life that ended in 1889, George F. Durand of nearby London designed more than 80 beautiful buildings in southwestern Ontario. His buildings are so widely acclaimed that, in architecture studies, the mid-1860s to 1889 is called The Durand Era.



Anne Marsh-Evans

His stature rose with his impressive commissions: The Perth County Court House in Stratford, the John Labatt House and East London Town Hall in London, numerous churches and impressive plans for Upper Canada College in Toronto.

Petrolia took much of his attention in the late 1880s. He designed three buildings on our Doors Open tour in quick succession: St. Philip's Catholic Church in 1887, Victoria Hall in 1889, and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church which opened in 1890, shortly after his death. On the main street, he also designed Petrolia's Masonic Temple in 1887 as well as The Archer Block.

The legacy of Durand's designs in Petrolia is enormous and it's most evident in the tale of Victoria Hall. It was largely because the building was so beautiful that it was restored as the cultural centre of community life in the 1970s.

And when Petrolia residents went to the theatre, it was not just to see professional performers but to see themselves, their friends and their extended families on stage or participating in activities. As these activities brought people together, they forged new links to the community and to Victoria Hall.

When fire destroyed it in 1989, some people cried in the streets. Motivated by the strong sense that it was *their* building, the community took on the long and difficult task of rebuilding it. When it reopened, it once again became a place for the community to gather and bond in new and interesting ways. No doubt it would have made George F. Durand smile. ❖

STAINED GLASS ART OF CHRISTOPHER WALLIS

Creating more than 800 striking stained glass windows sprinkled across Canada, the art of Christopher Wallis is well-known but his name is not. His style is non-traditional and he hand picks his selections of hand-blown glass. The windows of this Grand Bend artist are found in Ottawa's prestigious Rideau Hall, Osgoode Hall in Toronto, Government House in Victoria, B.C., Western University and scores of churches. One Wallis window was even on a Canadian stamp.

Petrolia is fortunate to have 15 of his works on our tour; 13 in Christ Church Anglican and two in Victoria Hall. The two Oil Heritage Windows in Victoria Hall and the Memorial Window in Christ Church Anglican tell the tale of our town's incredible oil history.

Wallis is no stranger to big themes like oil. His 10 heraldic windows at Osgoode Hall in Toronto cover 4,000 years of law history. At the Governor General's residence in Victoria, his 30 by 40-foot window in rich red hues tells the entire history of forestry in B.C..

Trained in England, Wallis is a fellow of the British Society of Master Glass Painters as well as The Royal Heraldry Society of Canada. He opened his studio in London, Ontario in the late 1950s, and later helped establish the Environmental Art Program at Fanshawe College. In the 1990s, he moved his studio to the Grand Bend area. Soft-spoken with a trace of a British accent, Wallis is busily working past the standard retirement age and taking his art in new directions. Earlier this year, Wallis and artist Geri Binks unveiled their three new "illuminated" stained glass windows for VanTuyl & Fairbank Solarware. ❖

VICTORIAN WINDOWS & GLASS

The Victorians used several different types of glass to decorate windows and they have different characteristics. Stained glass has an image painted on it and is kiln-fired. It uses expensive hand-blown glass which has variations and brilliance. Windows using manufactured glass are called decorative. This glass is consistent and less expensive. If this glass has a "hammered" texture, it's called cathedral glass and with no texture, it's sheet glass. Stained glass windows always use lead for assembling, whereas decorative glass may use lead or putty. ❖

VICTORIA HALL, 1889 411 GREENFIELD STREET. ARCHITECT - GEORGE F. DURAND

Since it opened in 1889, this well-loved landmark has created a vast number of memories for Petrolia. So much has happened in this building! Dances, weddings, performances of all kinds from grand to home-spun, heated political arguments, dinners, teas, films, jailings, firefighters dashing out the door on horse-drawn wagons, and boxing matches. There's still talk of ghosts and there was even a murder here!

Designed by George F. Durand, this town hall was built just as Petrolia was entering its glory years as Canada's centre of the booming oil industry. Five years earlier, Petrolia became the headquarters for Imperial Oil. In those oil rush days, Petrolia was home to a number of world travellers. The town had wealth along with sophisticated tastes.

Durand's asymmetrical design is complex and employs several architectural styles including Queen Anne Revival and Gothic. It has repeating patterns of arched windows, round windows and blocks of decorative cathedral glass in many colours. The graceful clock tower with a bell-shaped roof is artistically rendered with turned posts.

Victoria Hall's opera house hosted famous entertainment troupes, great orators, musicians of all kinds and Victorian women in ball gowns swished around at The Assemblies. The building also housed offices for the mayor, town clerk, engineer and police chief as well as the council chambers/courtroom, fire department and a jail.

During the 1900s, the town's oil industry declined. By the late 1950s, the opera house fell into disrepair through disuse. In the early 1970s, a teacher and his students wanted to use it and decided to clean it up. This sparked local citizens to create the Victoria Playhouse Foundation to restore the building and once again make it a cultural and community centre. After many repairs, incredible performers came including Theatre Passe Muraille, Liona Boyd, Codco, and Karen Kain.

The police department moved out in the early 1970s, but fire trucks continued to roar out of the building until 1977. Victoria Hall became a National Historic Site in 1979. In the 1980s, a glass foyer was added and the clock tower was temporarily removed for repairs.

Suddenly, on January 25, 1989, fire gutted the building. After much debate, Victoria Hall was rebuilt at a cost of \$6.5 million.



Anne Marsh-Evans

Through grants, generous donors and countless community fundraising events, the town successfully raised its required portion of the cost; \$750,000. Very impressive for a town that was only 4,500 souls!

Philip Goldsmith of Quadrangle Architects Ltd. mixed a contemporary interior with a faithfully rebuilt exterior, using the authentic materials needed for a heritage designation. It was a real challenge to design the council chamber, offices, a lobby big enough for many events and a state of the art theatre seating 400. "It's really a community building which allows for theatre functions," he said. The hard-working community celebrated with opening gala on Sept. 26, 1992.

For the entire summer (from mid-May to mid-September), Victoria Playhouse Petrolia brings in six shows, plus it books performances throughout the year. Petrolia continues to celebrate our great local talents too. Petrolia Community Theatre has staged 35 productions here. The high school gives musical performances each year and biennial musicals. The Lambton Youth Choir has had 40 concerts.

In 2011, two Oil Heritage Windows by stained glass artist Christopher Wallis were added to the entrance. Fairbank Oil presented them to the town to help everyone remember Petrolia's amazing oil history as they create new memories at Victoria Hall. ❖

ST. ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 1890 416 QUEEN STREET. ARCHITECT - GEORGE F. DURAND

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Petrolia would be among the last buildings architect George F. Durand designed before dying prematurely at the age of 39 in December 1889.

The architectural plans for the church were accepted just seven months before his death. Fred Henry, of Durand's architectural firm, completed the building, which opened officially on December 28, 1890. Durand's architectural drawings are so attractive they have been framed and displayed near the entrance of the church.

Like Durand's plan for St. Philip's Catholic Church that opened in 1887, this Gothic Revival church is not symmetrical. One large tower is at the north of the church and a smaller one is at the south. The interiors of both Petrolia churches by Durand feature carved wooden support trusses that are decorative as well as functional.

St. Andrew's design also shares similarities with Durand's Victoria Hall. Arches are continuously used in St. Andrew's and all 15 windows facing Queen Street are arched. At Victoria Hall, arches are used extensively. The ornate cast iron railings of St. Andrew's balcony are very reminiscent of the balcony railings that once graced the original Victoria Hall.

Once inside St. Andrew's, all eyes go directly to the magnificent pipe organ. It's front and centre and all the pews are arced around it. Considered a "Rolls Royce" of organs, this was crafted by the famous Casavant Frères of Montreal and installed in December 1903. Guest keyboard players simply rave about the beautiful quality of the sound.

Durand buildings have always been noted for their fine acoustics and with this terrific organ, the church often hosts special concerts of all sorts. Performances by The Lambton Youth Choir, the Black Family and Christmas Cantatas are all very popular. St. Andrew's has its own active choir as well.

Two stained glass windows have been added near the nave in recent years. The most recent acquisition is a stunning window depicting Jesus blessing the children. It was donated in 2005 and was made by Sunrise Stained Glass Inc., of London. The earlier window shows Jesus the Shepherd and was installed in 1967. Colourful decorative



Anne Marsh-Evans

glass windows are everywhere in the church including a large round window above the balcony.

This is the third church and the grandest one built by Presbyterians in Petrolia. Not only is it made of brick, but numerous choices of material and design made it stunning and expensive. Fortunately for the congregation, the Kerr family paid off the mortgage in memory of their parents. (*See Nemo Hall story, Page 14.*)

The Presbyterian congregation is also Petrolia's oldest, dating back as far as December 1858. During the summer of 1866, it built a substantial church on Pearl Street on the east end hill. By June 1873, that church was sold and it built a larger church on the south side of Bear Creek flats. Like the three other churches in the flats, it was perched on stiles to save it from periodic flooding. The Presbyterians remained in that church for 15 years even though water was occasionally heard lapping at the floor during services!

Moving to dry ground and this impressive church in 1890 was certainly an answer to their prayers. ❖

ST. PHILIP'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, 1887

415 KING STREET. ARCHITECTS GEORGE F. DURAND & JOHN MOORE

Like the Presbyterians and Methodists, the Catholics built their first church on Petrolia's east end hill. The original wooden church was constructed in 1867, on the east side of First Street. Today, this would be opposite Fiddick's Nursing Home.

As its congregation grew and the town developed westward, the Catholics decided by the mid-1880s they needed a new and bigger church. They chose the highly respected architect George F. Durand to design the building, assisted by John M. Moore of his firm. While the Catholic church was being built on King Street, Durand and Moore were also designing the Masonic Temple on Petrolia's main street.

The laying of the cornerstone on July 5, 1887 was a memorable event. Bishop John Walsh spoke for an incredible three hours! A time capsule was reported buried that day. (Exactly 100 years later, the church tried to locate it with a heavy-duty x-ray machine, but nothing could be found.) On Oct. 16, 1887, the church was dedicated and named St. Philip the Apostle.

Durand's design for St. Philip's is Gothic Revival, a style favoured by Catholics and Anglicans at the time because they believed it was evidence of their conservatism. One aspect of this architectural style is that it is asymmetrical and this shape is evident when walking around the perimeter of St. Philip's. There is only one large tower, built at the south end of the church, but it is balanced by two smaller towers to the north.

Considering himself an artist as well as an architect, Durand was not satisfied with plain brickwork. On the exterior brick, he designed some intricate patterns in the pointed Gothic arch and two crosses on each side of the upper cathedral windows. Crosses in the exterior brickwork can also be found on Durand's design at St. Andrew's Presbyterian.

The inside of St. Philip's is a restrained simplicity of white plaster walls with handsome decorative support beams of wood. Four stained glass windows at the front of the church supply colour and become focal points. Two on the altar frame the central crucifix: the one on the right represents St. Mark with the winged lion symbolizing



Ariel Lyons

Christ; the window to the left of the altar is St. Matthew with an angel.

In the nave, the two stained glass windows on each side are from Holy Rosary Church in Wyoming, which closed in 2007. To the right is Christ with Sacred Heart and to the left, the window shows an eagle symbolizing St. John. Decorative glass fills the windows along the sides of the church. Above the two church entrances are two small stained glass windows; one with a chalice, the other with a dove.

The ceiling sanctuary has medallions of gold showing the apostles Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They were stencilled by Mary Hudson of Wyoming and then painted by Petrolia artist Ariel Lyons. This may conjure up images of Michelangelo painting the Sistine Chapel, but these were not painted directly onto the ceiling. They were painted on canvas, then adhered to the ceiling.

The rectory behind the church was added in 1911, long after Durand's time. Its basement served as a parish hall for nearly 70 years. In 1979, the parish centre was built north of the church and in 2008 this was enlarged and a hallway connects it to the church.

St. Philip's Elementary School, fronting on Queen Street, was built in 1956. It expanded in 1999 and again in 2006. ❖

NEMO HALL, 1878 419 KING STREET

This opulent Second Empire home is the only one of its kind in Petrolia and is among its first brick buildings. When it was built, Petrolia had no brick churches and the buildings on the main street were all of wood. Only a handful of brick homes had been built in town at that time. Nemo Hall was somewhat in the country, with no development around it. That would change within the decade.

With its mansard roof, pine-shuttered tall windows, 18 rooms and sumptuous interior in rich woods, it's been a town landmark ever since John Kerr built it for his family in approximately 1878.

Over the years, this house has been a nursing home and two very successful antique shops. *Women's Day* magazine ran a nine-page feature on Nemo Hall in March 1990 with extensive photographs. It's been in Radio Shack ads too.

Kerr was an extraordinary entrepreneur. He ran a huge lumber and building business (J. & J. Kerr Company), had interests in oil and coal, plus he owned a vast amount of land in town which would become residential. He was Petrolia's mayor from 1879 to 1881 as well.

Nemo Hall remained in the Kerr family for more than 60 years, into the 1950s. Across the street, he built two matching homes for his daughters and he also built 50 homes in the King Street area.

There are five fireplaces in Nemo Hall and at least two were originally fuelled by gas. The most remarkable fireplace is carved out of Italian marble and it took first prize at the 1893 Chicago World Fair. Another is made of slate. Five wells on this estate provided fuel for the fireplaces. Initially, the estate was three acres, complete with an apple orchard and coach house.

Another outstanding feature of the house is the superb wood-carving craftsmanship found in the double oak entrance doors, the mahogany staircase, the oak-panelled dining room and the library of cherry and oak. This is the work of Tom Bicknell of Petrolia, who also did fantastic woodwork in the Fairbank mansion and in what is now Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital. Unsurprisingly, Nemo Hall received an Ontario Heritage designation in 1976.

Dates are unclear, but for roughly a decade, this home was the



Ariel Lyons

Stonehouse Nursing Home before Peter and Doris Clements bought it in 1967. Their daughter, Jenny Weed, remembers her family ripped up linoleum-covered floors and removed “wood panelling” wallpaper as they restored the house. It was their family home and they ran a high-end antiques store, drawing customers from Michigan and Toronto. She remembers too, her parents once posed in front of the house for a Radio Shack ad with a stereo mounted on a commode. The ad was flashed on TV and *Sports Illustrated* carried a print version.

In 1980, rumours flew that the Clements were selling the house. The Lambton County Catholic School Board talked about buying it and demolishing it, while the priest at St. Philip’s Catholic Church spoke of making it into a half-way house.

Lola Martel bought the home in 1981 and ran a successful antique store for years. Customers meandered throughout the whole house and they were particularly fond of her goldfish swimming in the claw-foot bathtub. Victoria Hall actors loved staying here and Nemo Hall was a highlight in several Home and Town Tours. In 2002, Jack Cantwell bought the house and later added two gargoyles to the roof. Nemo Hall was sold again in 2006 to a private buyer. For decades, squirrels loved this home too. ❖

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH, 1900 4169 PETROLIA LINE ARCHITECT - ISAAC ERB

Originally the Methodist Church, this building was often known as “the big church on the corner.” And a big church was very much needed because the Wesleyan and Episcopal Methodists combined their congregations in 1884.

With seating for an astounding 675, it is Petrolia's largest church. The first service was held on May 24, 1900, and it was the last of Petrolia's churches to rebuild in brick after moving from the flats at Bear Creek on the east end hill. After Church Union in 1925, it became Petrolia United Church, and later St. Paul's United Church.

Remarkably, the church had its own oil well near the southeast corner of the building. The pumpjack could be heard during services if the windows were open. The well was capped in the mid-1960s and the oil royalties to the church ceased.

Also, Michigan Central trains used to run and rattle on the east side of the building. The line, which had changed to New York Central, was discontinued in May 1960.

When designing St. Paul's in the late 1890s, the architect Isaac Erb blended Victorian style with Romanesque influences and added grandeur. More than 100 decorative glass windows flood the church with colour and the effect is amazing. There are no less than 12 rose-styled windows, three of them quite large. Restoring the windows is a massive \$250,000 project that began in 1995.

A graceful curved balcony with beautiful cast iron railings overlooks an impressive sanctuary of 64-square feet. The chandelier shining 50 feet above the sanctuary was originally fuelled by natural gas piped in from nearby wells. In the 1920s, it was replaced by 57 light bulbs. A winch lowers the entire fixture when new bulbs are needed.

High-quality craftsmanship is found throughout the church. The tongue-and-groove floors are made of white pine. The pews are made of white oak and it also has been used to top the decorative cast iron railing in the balcony.

The aging of the building has led to some changes. In 1946, water damage led to removing the top 23 feet of the northeast tower and later, the top of the northwest tower was removed. Both towers



Ariel Lyons

had a very ornamental copper cap. In the northeast tower, you can still ring the large original bell by pulling a rope in the alcove.

The church's highly-prized pipe organ, built by Edward Lye and Sons of Toronto, was lovingly restored and rebuilt in 1963 at a cost of more than \$13,000.

This is a wonderful setting for concerts. Although years have passed, people still talk fondly of hearing Handel's *Messiah* performed here by The Clarion Orchestra and Choir. Liona Boyd, Valdy, and other well-known musicians played here when Victoria Hall was being rebuilt between 1989 and 1992. Valdy's visit was memorable because he took a break outside and found himself locked out. He had to enter through the basement where a rummage sale was being organized and he happily purchased a set of golf clubs.

A wide assortment of activities continually bring crowds to St. Paul's. Each year the church volunteers bake about 4,000 turkey pies in the basement kitchen to raise funds! Along with many religious gatherings there are brunches, dinners, puppet plays, and an annual community Christmas concert. ❖

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 1897 418 GREENFIELD STREET ARCHITECT - ISAAC ERB

This year, the First Baptist congregation is celebrating! It's 140 years since its story first began.

Not long after a small band of 20 souls met for prayer worship in the Greenfield Street home of Charles Rowles, they officially formed a congregation on May 2, 1872. T. S. Johnson would head the congregation and draw a salary of \$600 a year.

The Baptists were the first of four faiths to build a church on the Bear Creek flats. In October 1873, they constructed a frame building at a cost of \$2,600. The Presbyterians built there later that year, joined by the Episcopal Methodists in 1874, and the Wesleyan Methodists in 1876. The area flooded often, so the churches were all built on stiles to keep them above water.

This first church on the flats would be home to the Baptists for 25 years and extensive repairs in 1879 had helped. In February 1896, Baptists voted unanimously to build a new church. In fact, they were so enthusiastic, they raised \$4,000 on the spot.

They bought the land on Greenfield Street from The Crescent Oil Company. Then, on March 7, 1897, the beautiful brick Gothic Revival church opened.

Isaac Erb of Port Huron designed the church, the same architect who would design Petrolia's Methodist Church in 1900. The Baptist church shares some design elements with St. Philip's Catholic church, designed by architect George F. Durand. Sometimes, the Baptist church has been mistakenly attributed to him. Both churches have a large tower at one end and a smaller tower at the other. At some point, the Baptists removed the north tower, likely because of water damage. The date is unknown.

All the solid oak in the First Baptist Church is original and a finely detailed wrought iron railing wraps around the choir loft. One unusual feature of the building is an oak wall that lifts to open into the parish hall.

There are numerous cathedral windows of amber decorative glass bathing the church in a warm light. When First Baptist opened in 1898, it had electric light and 290 yards of carpet had been



Anne Marsh-Evans

manufactured in Toronto for the church.

The cost of the land, building, and furnishings totalled \$14,000 and the corner lot at Walnut Street was purchased for \$375. It's a testament to the generosity of the Baptists that the mortgage was a mere \$2,500. Decades of tough times hit Petrolia after the turn of the century, but in the midst of the Depression they paid off the amount in 1934 with much rejoicing.

In the early 1900s, First Baptist created its own monthly paper, *Oil from the Rock*, with advertising from Petrolia and Oil Springs. A 1903 issue shows the annual subscription rate was 25 cents.

The church hall at First Baptist has always been a busy place and has held Sunday school since its very early days. It's a practice that dates back to 1781 in England when Robert Raikes opened a school on Sundays for the child factory workers. The Bible was his textbook for teaching the children how to read and write.

First Baptist is not just busy on Sundays. Many groups of all ages meet on a regular basis and have for decades. In 1932, the church even formed its own 20-piece Sunday school orchestra. In the spring of 2012, the church organized a 10-day, dawn-to-dusk reading of the Bible which drew countless volunteers from the community. ❖

CHRIST CHURCH ANGLICAN, 1959 414 OIL STREET. STAINED GLASS BY CHRISTOPHER WALLIS

Parishioners of Christ Church were amazed to learn in 2010 that their well-loved collection of 13 stained glass windows are the work of one of Canada's leading artists - Christopher Wallis. They discovered that other stained glass windows by Wallis have been unveiled by the queen, photographed by Karsh, and even celebrated in a Canadian postage stamp.

For years, parishioners had known their highly original Memorial Window was special. Installed in 1983, the 9 by 16-foot window is a melding of traditional and contemporary iconography. It depicts Christ the Good Shepherd surrounded by oil pioneers drilling, refining, transporting oil and introducing their methods to foreign lands.

A timeline frames the window on three sides, listing 30 key events of Petrolia's oil history. It begins with Abraham Gesner inventing kerosene in 1846 and ends in 1899 with Imperial Oil moving its operations and headquarters from Petrolia to Sarnia. This exceptional window was granted Ontario Heritage designation in 2005.

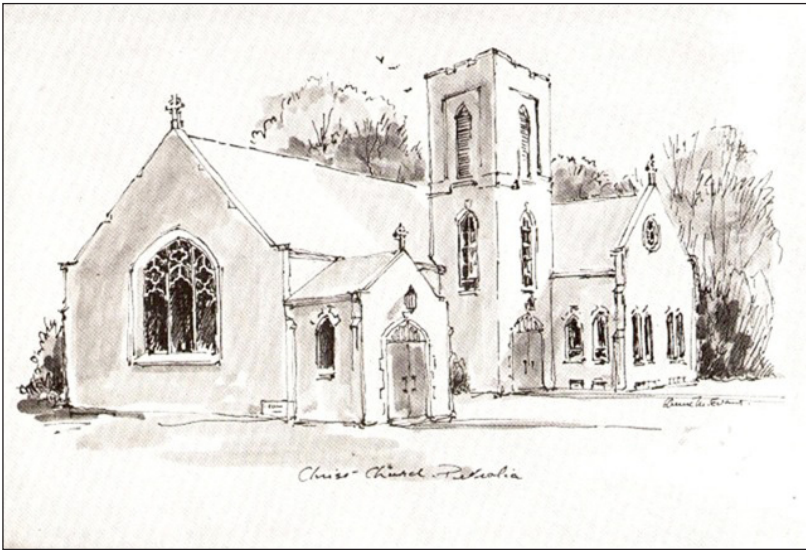
The Memorial Window may seem unusual for a church, but the founders of this congregation were also the founders of the oil industry; notably Canada's largest oil producer, John Henry Fairbank, and its largest refiner, Jacob Lewis Englehart.

The tale of the windows dates back to January 10, 1957 when Christ Church's beautiful white brick church of 1882 burned to the ground. The present church was erected on the same site in 1959. For the sake of economy, only plain windows were installed.

Christ Church had the rare opportunity to plan the windows as a collection. Rev. George Menzies planned an understated theme based on The Rules of Life from the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*. Wallis says this likely makes them unique in Canada.

Wallis began the Christ Church windows in 1961 and completed the collection 27 years later. Donors financed all the windows and they were created as funds became available. Few churches have the chance to have all their stained glass created by one artist.

And there is another happy story from the 1957 fire. The magnificent chime of 11 bells, weighing over 10,000 pounds, was saved. In



Anne Marsh-Evans

1909, Englehart had donated them in memory of his wife, Charlotte, who died on their 17th wedding anniversary at the age of 45.

The steeple of the Victorian church was removed to accommodate the chimes. They have nine bells which are played by pushing wooden handles, laid out in a chiming keyboard. At the church entrance, a brass plaque salvaged from the fire commemorates Englehart's gift of the chimes.

When Englehart and Charlotte Thompson married in Christ Church in 1891, it was the most lavish wedding Petrolia had ever seen. Englehart presented each bridesmaid with a diamond ring.

The 1882 church had been called The Church of England and was nicknamed "the English church". It was the first brick church to be built in Petrolia and noted for its handsome Victorian features.

Earlier, in 1872, the parishioners built a plain wooden church near Railroad Street on land donated by John Henry Fairbank. It was cold and drafty but they were grateful to actually have a church. Initially, the congregation formed in 1866 and its first service was held in the bar of the American Hotel with the liquor discreetly covered by a curtain. For the next six years as they waited to build a church, services were held in Fairbank Hall at the foot of the east end hill.

The story of Christ Church has long been steeped in oil and its story is as unique as Petrolia. ❖

MARTHAVILLE UNITED CHURCH, 1880 AT PETROLIA DISCOVERY (SEE MAP ON BACK COVER)

The Marthaville United Church at Petrolia Discovery is the oldest church to be found in Petrolia and also the only remaining wood-en church. In 1999, it became a provincially designated heritage site.

While Petrolia churches rebuilt once or twice and moved on to brick, this original church of the Wesleyan Methodists dates back to 1880 when it stood on the north side of LaSalle Line, (formerly the 12th Line) near the Marthaville Sideroad.

Moving the church to the Discovery pioneer village on May 10, 2001 was an enormous job, taking 10 hours and costing more than \$40,000. Thanks to a generous donation, a new \$30,000 roof was installed and the steeple with the bell tower was reattached. Petrolia volunteers have been painting and maintaining the building as funds become available.

The small hamlet of Marthaville, a few kilometres northwest of Petrolia, sprang to life with an oil gusher in 1872 and sent drillers scurrying to the area. Soon a saddle-bag preacher for the Methodist Episcopal Church was on the spot and a church was built on the south side of LaSalle Line in the early 1870s. Known as “the brown church” because of its colour, it was believed to be a going concern by 1872.

In 1880, the Wesleyan Methodists built a church on the north side of LaSalle Line at a cost of \$1,920. These two Methodist churches competed with each other for four years before uniting as The Marthaville Methodist Church in 1884. The Episcopal church was sold to the Presbyterians. The Wesleyan Church was the one that was used for services. It became a centre for community life with picnics, socials, prayer meetings, and classes for The Young People’s Society.

At one point, the Wesleyan preacher decided, without the consent of the trustees, to move the Episcopal church to the north side of the road. When it was half-way across the road, the trustees arrived and ordered that the church be taken back. Angry words flew and long-bearded men shook their fists at one another. There sat the church in the middle of the road for some time before being moved back.

Today, Marthaville is a cluster of houses, but back in the oil boom it had hotels, stores, a town hall and jail plus a boardwalk that



Ariel Lyons

ran to Petrolia and along the LaSalle Line. Early in the 1900s, the oil boom was over and people began to leave Marthaville, many taking their houses with them.

In 1925, Methodists churches everywhere became known as United churches. Under the new name of the Marthaville United Church, this became part of the Petrolia charge. By that time, however, the Marthaville population had dwindled to the point that services were no longer held here but Sunday School still continued.

In 1935, six women formed the Marthaville Friendship Sewing Circle to look after the building. Each year, it arranged an anniversary service, Old Boy's Reunion or annual Christmas Tree Concert. Records show the group spent \$1,500 on repairs in 1952 and St. Paul's United Church in Petrolia helped with services and special events.

Amazingly, the church was looked after for more than seven decades after the church services ended in 1929. The Marthaville Friendship Circle continued until it decided the upkeep was too much and the building was donated to the Petrolia Discovery Foundation.

Today, this historic church is used for weddings, reunions, occasional church services, theatrical performances as well as special Petrolia Discovery events. ❖

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