

## Mission Hall

The work of the Mission Hall, Kirk Avenue, began about 1916 to fill the needs of French and Belgian people employed by the General Mining Association, <sup>and their families</sup>. Many of them could speak little or no English so they were deprived both educationally and culturally.

Miss Susan B. Sylvester, New Glasgow was the first deaconess, followed by Miss Rose Miller, Saint John's, Newfoundland, Miss Margaret Sylvester, New Glasgow, Miss Harris, New Waterford, Mrs. Littlewood, Miss Elma Inman, Prince Edward Island, Miss Emma Murphy, Rothesay, New Brunswick, Miss Isabel Haddock, Miss MacIvor and Miss Hannah Nicholson. Mrs. Beryl Scott supervised activities at the Mission hall in the last years before it was sold to a non-denominational church group in 1975. The trustees' records speak in glowing terms of the devotion and dedication of these ladies.

At first, meetings and Sunday School were held in private homes but in 1919 the hall was built under the supervision of Mr. Henry Ross, contractor.

The building committee was comprised of the ministers of the three participating churches, Rev. C.C. McIntosh, Sharon, Rev. W. A. Outerbridge, Methodist and Rev. D. M. Matheson, St. John as well as Messrs. John Fellows, T. J. Reid, H. S. Cutten and Robert Fraser.

The opening exercises of the new hall, looked forward to by so many interested people, were held on Friday, September 26, 1919.

In the ensuing years the Mission Hall served as a social centre for both men and women of the area as well as a Sunday School for their children.

In 1970 one of the Sunday School teachers, Mrs. Verna Gass, realized a need for pre-school training for the four year olds in her charge so she, assisted by Mrs. Betty MacKenzie initiated a head start

program which became the "Happy Times" Pre-School. A donation of \$100.00 from the C.G.I.T. of Sharon St. John Church as well as donations from private sources met financial needs at first. Later the Dept. of Social Services provided a grant which was supplemented later by funds from the various town churches.

Mrs. Gass and Mrs. MacKenzie were assisted in their work by Mrs. Judy Hayman and Mrs. Noreen Roy in the later years. With the sale of the Mission Hall the Sharon St. John <sup>Lower Church</sup> Hall was made available to the group with Mrs. Roy and Mrs. Ruth Kingsbury continuing the good work.

Among the interested persons who formed the first board to expedite the head-start program were:

Chairman - Father Morley  
 Rev. Douglas Gass  
 Mrs. Aileen Hale  
 Miss Nellie Mahoney  
 Mr. Jack MacLean  
 Mrs. Rhoda Hogan  
 Mrs. Elizabeth Robertson  
 Mr. Earl Gratto

References: Maritime Conference Archives Atlantic School of  
 Theology, Halifax  
 Trustees' Records 1916-1925

History of Stellarton - Aubrey Dorrington