

**Diamond Jubilee History**  
of the  
**Diocese of Hamilton**

WITH  
**A COMPLETE HISTORY**  
OF THE  
**COUNTY OF WATERLOO**

1856-1916



**THEOBALD SPETZ, C.R., D.D.**







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ERRATA

- Page 20, line below illustration, read *Caveng* instead of Laveng.  
Page 103, in third last line read *Deiter* for Deitner.  
Page 105, below right hand lower cut read *Rogalski* for Rozalski.  
Page 106, third last line read *Rogalski* for Rozalski.  
Page 108, below right hand lower cut read *Lanz* for Lauz.  
Page 222, on fourth last line after 1852 cancel "58."  
Page 226, In Acton paragraph read *Oustic* instead of Onstic.  
Page 226, under Ayton paragraph, read *Hahn* for Hahn.  
Page 227, under Cape Croker read *Cadot* for Cadou.  
Page 227, under Carlsruhe, read *Hahn* for Hahn.  
Page 228, under Chepstow read *Zettler* for Zenler.  
Page 229, under Durham read *Hauck* for Hanck; the same on page  
235 under St. Joseph's Church.  
Page 236, under Markdale read *Hauck* for Hanck.  
Page 237, under Owen Sound read *Bardon* for Bardon.  
Page 238, under Riversdale read *Bardon* for Bardon.





HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XV.

# THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN WATERLOO COUNTY

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## BOOK I

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With a Summary History of the Diocese of Hamilton, Book II, and  
a List of the Clergy Who Labored in Its District from  
the Beginning to the Present, Book III.

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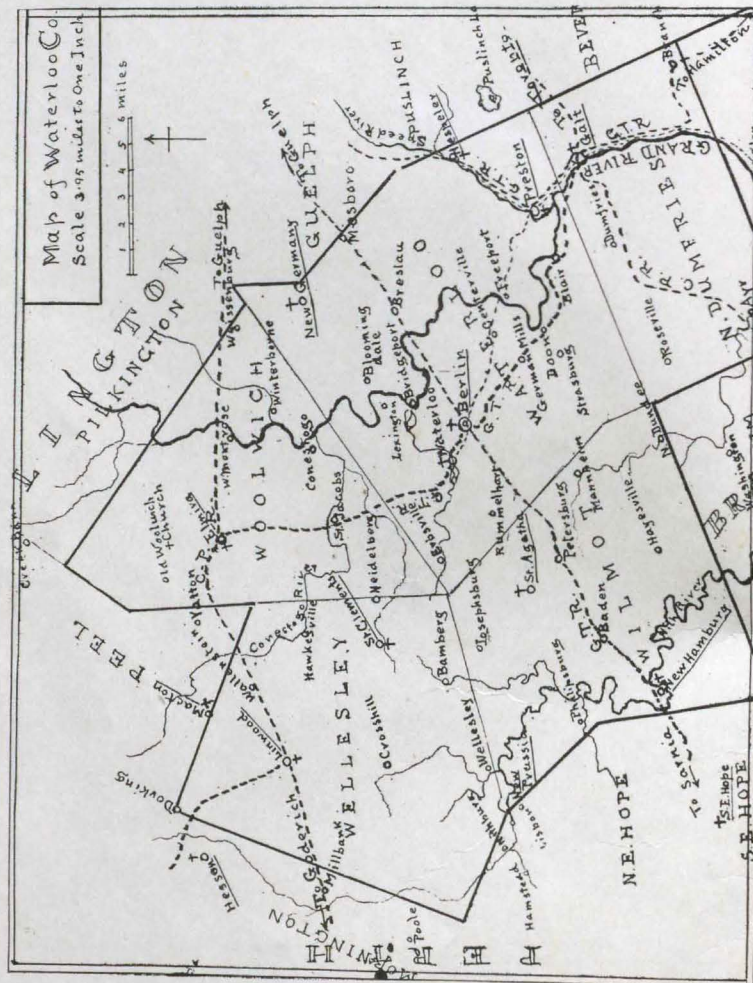
BY

REV. THEOBALD SPETZ, C.R., D.D.

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## SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

- The Diocesan Archives of Hamilton, Toronto, and Kingston.
- The Records of all the parishes in Hamilton Diocese, besides those of many parishes from Goderich and St. Thomas to Toronto.
- William Johnston's History of Perth County.
- W. H. Smith's Canada Past, Present and Future. 2 Vols., 1851-52.
- History of the Separation of Church and State in Canada, by Rev. R. Stimson, M.A.
- The History of Bruce County.
- The Talbot Regime, by C. O. Ermatinger, K.C.
- The Times of the Canada Company, by the Misses Lizars.
- The Centennial Number of the County of Waterloo.
- Various Atlases with Historical Notes.
- Ezra Eby's History of Waterloo and Woolwich Townships.
- Many Volumes of the Catholic Directory of the United States.
- Various Volumes of Canada Ecclesiastique.
- Notes collected by Mr. H. F. McIntosh, Toronto.
- The Archives of St. Mary's College, Montreal.
- The Archives of the University of Innsbruck, Austria.
- Hundreds of letters all over Canada, the States and Europe.
- Hundreds of interviews with old people all over the County and Diocese.
- Personal reminiscences of the author.
- The Jubilee History of the Archdiocese of Toronto, by the Rev. Dr. Teefy, C.S.B.
- The City and Diocese of London, by Rev. John F. Coffey, M.A.
- Publications anent the Golden Jubilee of the Diocese of Hamilton.
- Rev. Dean Harris' Catholic Church in the Niagara Peninsula.
- Die Annalen fuer die Verareitung des Glauvens, Letters copied for the Author by the Benedictines of St. Vincent's Abbey of Beatty, Pa., through the request of the Editor of St. Peter's Bote of Munster, Sask., Can.
- Letters to Mr. Antony Kaiser, 2, of St. Agatha.
- Old files of The Berliner Journal, Busy Berlin, and other local publications.



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## PREFACE

(By DEAN HARRIS)

"The History of the Catholic Church in the County of Waterloo" is not only the work of a historical student who has industriously burrowed and tunneled into the annals of early times but it is also the compilation of a scholar to the manner born who has in the very texture of his mind the flavour of rural life. When gathering the material for this very informational volume, the author studied the topography of his county; consulted the aged sons and daughters of pioneer settlers; rummaged through files of old newspapers; inspected valuable documents in Registry offices; wrote sheafs of letters in quest of knowledge or to verify his dates; consulted authorities in parliamentary and provincial libraries, and examined the marriage, death and baptismal registers of central Ontario. His researches have imparted to his History an exceptional life and vitality and a particularity of facts, persons and incidents which constitutes it a depository of valuable information.

The average historian too often contents himself with information gathered from books, and is satisfied to do his work in his own study, but the specialist must seek material for his history from every available source, and with extraordinary industry, care and solicitude. The accumulation of facts for his work is a concern of much trouble and difficulty, and these facts may only be obtained by one who is dowered with special talents and lives close to the people.

Father Spetz fortunately is gifted with an historical intuition and a mastery of detail which impart to his History most valuable qualities.

His book is a work of deep research, full and informational on the struggles, trials and heroism of the pioneer priests and settlers of Waterloo County. It will be read with intense satisfaction by the descendants of the stalwart immigrants who, a hundred years ago, crossed the Atlantic, and with strong bodies and brave hearts entered the wilderness and subdued it. But it is to be hoped the volume will also be read and appreciated by many outside the boundaries of Waterloo County, especially by those who are interested in the development and progress of the Catholic Church in our Province in early times.

For in this History we obtain an authentic account of the trials, hardships and heroic lives of priests and people in those early days; we see them hewing log chapels and log buildings from the primeval forest; we behold them, as in a vitascope, going about intent, lovingly intent, on training their children in the morality, decency and religion they brought with them into the wilder-



ness. In this book also we are everywhere face to face with personalities, genuine and real, with devout and self-sacrificing priests, and with men and women of heroic mould.

One of the difficulties when dealing with the sober circumstances of life in a newly-opened settlement is to choose between what is too interesting to omit in the record and what is too trifling to include. Father Spetz in this History manifests a remarkable sense for facts, a rare gift for verifying his statements so far as dates could be found, an ability to rate at their actual value the traditions of a community, and a quick discernment to detect the value of information when separating the legendary from the true.

The book is interesting and scholarly from cover to cover and is full of reliable information from the pen of a writer, whose intimate familiarity with local documentary history and with many of the estimable characters introduced to the readers, deepens the fascination of its pages.

It is an admirable undertaking carried out in an admirable way and, independently of its intrinsic worth, its fine type, paper and binding, is a triumph of the art of photogravure illustration.

## FOREWORD.

Some time in the year 1911 the editor of the "St. Peter's Bote," of Muenster, Sask., asked for a historical sketch of the German Catholic Missions of the Province of Ontario for his paper. Thinking that this was a nice little undertaking, the promise of furnishing it was promptly given without hesitation.

It did not take the writer long to see that he had made a rash promise. The sources of information were scarce and imperfect as far as the parish records were accessible. The first generation of settlers, as well as many of the second, had already gone to their reward. The earlier missionaries left their records scattered so much that no one knows where to look for them. Hence, the writer was obliged to wade through volumes of registers of many parishes; to search the scant archives of various Chancellories of the Province; to spend days and weeks in the registry offices in search of land titles, etc., and above all, to interview as many of the older settlers as possible for information. Letters of inquiry were sent all over America, even to Europe. Then some old histories were consulted. Several gentlemen who had been gathering notes on the subject were seen. Among these was Mr. MacIntosh, of Toronto, who deserves special mention for having given free use of his copious notes gathered during many years.

It is a pity that someone had not undertaken this work 15 or 20 years ago, when many of the old settlers were still alive.

A work of this kind was done by Mr. Ezra Eby, a classmate of the writer at college, in the middle of the sixties of the last century, for his Mennonite Brethren in Waterloo County. For 35 years or more he taught school through Waterloo Township, and assiduously gathered whatever information he could. In 1895 and 1896 he published the results of his life-long labors in two splendid volumes, which will forever remain a monument of his ant-like diligence and perseverance. His financial reward was meagre, indeed.

Had we Catholics but had such a man! The Rev. Dr. Tracy, now of Toronto, did some creditable work of this kind in various missions in which he had been stationed. Rev. John Gnam, while pastor of Hesson, published a very complete little history of that parish. So has Rev. P. J. Donovan, for Dunnville.

If every pastor would endeavor to do the same in his own parish the future historian of the Church would find his material ready. No one can do this as readily as the pastor who is on the spot, and has opportunities denied to others for gathering information. Moreover, they might keep their Announcement books in substantial copy books and preserve them religiously as one of the



most copious sources of information regarding the life and work of the parish. As to the present work, let the reader not expect too much. It is necessarily confined to the County of Waterloo and some adjoining parishes, unless time and opportunity is given to the writer to give a summary account of the churches in this Diocese of Hamilton.

Considering the circumstances and time, the reader may find much that is incomplete and possibly inexact, particularly as to dates, regarding which peoples' memory is quite defective.

As to style, the author pretends to none, nor does he claim to exhaust the subject. In fact, he would be extremely pleased to find others more competent, covering the same ground more thoroughly than he was able to do it.

Finally the writer feels it incumbent on himself to acknowledge, with the fullest meed of gratitude, his debt to all those who, in many ways, contributed information, often with considerable loss of time and no small inconvenience to themselves, particularly to the Rev. Father Jones, S.J., Archivist of St. Mary's College, Montreal, to whose kindness he owes fuller particulars of the Jesuit Fathers who labored long and well here.

## INTRODUCTION.

Waterloo County is situated near the centre of the western half of Ontario, the peninsula bounded by the Lakes Ontario, Erie, Huron and Georgian Bay. Beginning from the south, it contains first the Township of North Dumfries, with Galt as its chief business centre. It is chiefly settled by Scotchmen. Due north of it lies Waterloo Township, which was originally bought, and in great part settled, by Pennsylvania Mennonites. North of this Township lies Woolwich, which was also largely settled by Mennonites. West of Woolwich is Wellesley Township, originally settled by people of various nationalities and religions. Lastly comes Wilmot Township, taken up in large part by the Amish Brethren.

The inhabitants of the four northern townships of this County are mostly of German origin, and still retain the language and customs of their Fatherland.

The first settlers coming to Waterloo Township were Pennsylvania German Mennonites, still called Pennsylvania "Dutch," though few of them really came originally from Holland, the country of the Dutch. Most of them came from further up the Rhine, Germany and Switzerland. The Palatinate furnished most of them, and these Pfälzers, as they are called in Germany, succeeded in imposing their peculiar dialect on the whole German population of the County. Only in New Germany the Lower Alsatians, being in the majority, imposed their dialect on their neighbors from other parts.

The early arrivals of German Pennsylvanians came in 1798, and took up land on the southern end of Waterloo Township along the Grand River, which flows through the whole County from north to south. They bought their land from Richard Beasley. Some years later, when a considerable number had come in, they discovered that Mr. Beasley was not the sole owner of the land he was selling. He had two partners. Moreover, the land, which comprised almost the whole of Waterloo Township, was incumbered with a large mortgage.

This proved a great setback for the new colony for the nonce. However, the colonists called a meeting, selected several among their midst as delegates to lay their case before their friends in Pennsylvania. In the end they succeeded in forming a company, called "The German Land Company," which subscribed the capital to redeem the mortgage on the block of land forming Waterloo Township, and to purchase the whole block. Then they had it surveyed, divided into lots of 448 acres each, which they afterwards distributed by lot to the shareholders of the company, according to each one's subscription. The survey included no road allowances. The roads of the Township were afterwards made where most convenient, without regard to regularity or system.



In the year 1800 Ancaster, a little west of Hamilton, and Dundas, on a small bay at the east end of Lake Ontario, were the most northern little villages this side of the Niagara River. Between Dundas and Waterloo Township there was an almost impenetrable swamp, called the Beverly swamp, which remained for decades the terror of teamsters. Yet Dundas was, and remained, the market for the entire district northward for 80 to 100 miles until the era of railways was ushered in.

As near as can be ascertained the first Catholic settlers came into Waterloo Township about the year 1826 or '27, after a large number of people from Pennsylvania, mostly Mennonites, had taken up the greater part of the land.

This brings us to the point where the history of the Catholic Church in the district may be said to begin in an embryonic way.

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