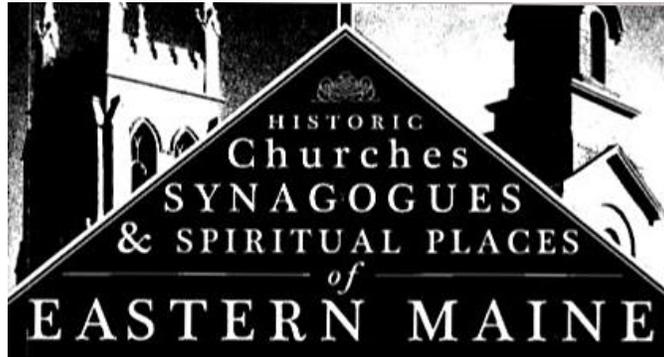


St. Michael the Archangel Church - Historical Information

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The historic village of Cherryfield was first settled in 1757 by Ichabod Willey, a New Hampshire native. After his arrival in this way Down East community, he built a log cabin that became known as Willey Hill. He then returned to New Hampshire to move his family to their home. Additional settlers arrived during the late 1700's, including Alexander Campbell, the father of Cherryfield lumber industry, and General Campbell, who arrived and built his home on Campbell Hill in 1790. During the early 19th century, Cherryfield continued to see its population expand, which coincided with the arrival of Irish immigrants. While no historical records precisely document these early arrivals, there exists some unsubstantiated data that indicate some Irish Catholic immigrants could have been living in this area as early as the late 1820's.

By the summer 1850, it is well documented that many thousands of Catholics were scattered over Eastern Maine and were on the circuit stations covered by Father John Bapst, a Swiss Jesuit missionary. Cherryfield was one of ten circuit stations that Father Bapst served.

Ten years later, in 1864, a determined group of Catholics banded together to build Saint Michael's Church in Cherryfield. These first parishioners paid \$5,000 for the small parcel of land that became the site of their church. This dollar amount was excessive at that time for the very small piece of land involved and indicated that the local non-Catholics were not too happy with a growing Catholic population in their community. Thankfully, the money was raised to make St. Michael's Church become a reality.

On January 22, 1874, James Mahoney and Peter Smith conveyed by warranty deed # 503 the property transfer for \$3,500 to Bishop David Bacon. The first Catholic priest to officiate and the new mission church of Saint Joseph's in Ellsworth was Father Madden. Traveling by horse and buggy, Catholics from Addison, Beddington, Cherryfield, Centerfield, Burlington, Columbia, Columbia Falls, Deblois, Millbridge, and Steuben came to attend Mass. The church was lit by gasoline lanterns and heated by a wood stove.

A steeple can be seen in old photographs of Saint Michael's circa 1864–65. According to an account by Charlie Wakefield, who died many years ago, the steeple was found piercing the lawn in front of the church after a bad storm. No one seems to know what happened to the steeple after that.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Saint Michael's remained a mission of St. Joseph's in Ellsworth. The pastor of Saint Joseph's would take early train from Ellsworth and then return on the late train. There were no Masses held at St. Michael's during the winter.

It was not until the Reverend Lionel J. Chouninard became pastor of Holy Name Church in Machias and St. Michael's was a mission of Holy Name Church that Masses were celebrated year-round in Cherryfield. Winter Masses initially were held at the Weald Bethel Chapel in Cherryfield and then later at the Cherryfield town office.

In 1986, a fundraiser was organized for the purpose of financing a new foundation for St. Michael's Church. John P. Harriman generously sold a quarter acre of land to St. Michael's Church for creating a new foundation for the building and provide more parking space. St. Michael's underwent a transformation in 1990 when the building was moved onto its new foundation. The new heated church basement provided adequate space for celebrating Mass during the Winter months.