

DISCOVERING OUR PAST

Church Hall in Jollimore was focal point for community events

by Iris Shea

The parishioners of St. Augustine's Anglican Church on Parkhill Road in Jollimore began their Building Fund in February 1949 to build a church hall that would provide space for church and community events. The Ladies Guild donated \$1,069 at that time and Mrs. A.D.M. (Brenda) Curry donated \$1000 in memory of her late mother, Marion (Essen) Morrow.

The Ladies Guild continued to hold fundraising events such as their teas, suppers and card socials at members' homes. I recall taking home a "penny box" from Sunday School for the building fund, filling it with pennies, and returning it. Mrs. Aylmer Burton issued penny boxes to all parishioners.

Parishioner Josiah "Joe" Boutilier donated land for the hall. The name declared was Boutilier Memorial Hall. For those of you who are not familiar with the hall location, it is now Pond Playhouse at 6 Parkhill Road. Reverend Beverly Strople turned the first sod in the spring of 1951. Mr. Rex Burgess signed the contract to build the hall and construction began shortly after the sod turning ceremony. There were financial headaches along the way causing some delays, but these were eventually resolved when Mrs. Curry offered a \$4000 loan and later donated another \$2000. Joe Boutilier also made a loan of \$2000 to the Hall Committee, and Rex Burgess reduced his building fee by 10 percent.

The new Boutilier Memorial Hall officially opened on November 6, 1952. I do not recall hearing that name used for the hall. St. Augustine's Church Hall was the usual name. The building was a long one-level cement structure with a raised stage at one end. The space behind the stage was used as a kitchen. The entrance



Photo of Variety Show at St. Augustine's Church Hall, Jollimore, about 1957. From left to right, Grace Powell, Etta Jollimore, Hilda Gilkie, Glady Melvin, Unknown, Ruth Dimock. On floor is Olive Glover. Courtesy Mildred Richardson.

faced Parkhill Road.

Enthusiastic parishioners and their friends gathered to attend the pre-Christmas event in 1952 sponsored by the Ladies Guild, with Mrs. Arthur Scarfe and Mrs. Ralph Hopkins as conveners. Mrs. Guy Henson and Mrs. George Melvin organized the pantry table to sell baked goods; Mrs. Charles Yeadon and Miss Adwyn Jollimore sold fancy work; and Shirley Jollimore, Leah Jollimore and Dorothy Bignell organized games for children. A special feature of the event was a series of stages set up to represent the customs and activities of four countries, Africa, Japan, Arabia and Holland. Mrs. A.D.M. Curry provided the costumes and Mr. Curry built the four backdrops. Children and adults from the parish, thirty in total, were dressed in those costumes.

Another successful event held in the church hall was a Christmas concert in 1953. A capacity audience enjoyed the

singing by the young children as well as the play "The Little Shepherd" starring Lois and Clinton Proctor, David and Wendy Melvin, and Michael Scarfe, under the direction of Mildred McDonald and her assistant, Brenda Glover, who also served as accompanist.

Annual Variety Shows were a big draw and a great fundraiser. The Men's Club of St. Augustine's Church helped organize the shows and usually starred in them along with other members of the parish. Joan Schnare's comedy acts were memorable, as were the performances of many talented singers and actors. One performance that stands out in my memory is that of brothers, Russell and Leo Topple of Kline Heights...Russell on the fiddle, Leo on the piano, playing the Orange Blossom Special.

Organizations like Brownies and Cubs started meeting at the hall in 1952. Girl Guides began weekly meetings in 1953 under the direction of Mrs. George

Melvin. Parishioner Walter (Bing) Jussup brought movies to the hall every Saturday evening. This was one of the highlights of growing up in Jollimore. I do not remember paying a fee. We, as young children, did not have spending money. My brother, Greg Umlah, was in charge of setting up the chairs in the hall before the movie began, and taking them down when the movie was over, his friends helping him. There was always a full house. We watched movies that were shown in the movie theatres only one week earlier. The exception, however, was the 1953 movie called "So Big", starring Jane Wyman and Sterling Hayden. That movie appeared a week later in local theatres. Mr. Jussup was a member of the Canadian Army, one of the reasons why he had access to these great movies.

The church hall was the focal point of the community, bringing people together for church suppers and weekly card socials. Wedding receptions and other family events took place in the hall. My mother, Mrs. Allan Umlah, held her annual June recitals there for her piano students. If you were a member of the parish and wished to rent the hall, you paid \$15. The cost to non-parishioners was \$25.

In 1963, the need for that hall was ending. A new St. Augustine's Church was built on the Purcell's Cove Road and a church hall was located in the basement. The dedication of the new church took place on March 21, 1964. In April 1964, plans were made to sell the church hall for \$8000, with the Vestry agreeing to a reduced price of \$7000. In November 1965 Theatre Arts Guild made an offer; in February 1966 St. Augustine's Church Hall on Parkhill Road became the property of the Theatre Arts Guild and Pond Playhouse was born.

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