

Trinity Anglican Church
Original Building
Sebringville, Perth County, circa 1887

Contributed by Grace Frogley

Trinity Anglican Church in Sebringville was formed in 1872 by the Coulter, Hamilton, Moore, Pearson, and Ruston families as a mission of Stratford's St. James' Anglican Church. Between the five families, thirty people in total were attending services.¹ On July 24, 1886, Anthony Goettler sold land in Sebringville to the Incorporated Synod of the Diocese of Huron for sixty dollars,² and in 1887 Trinity Church was built on Lot 17 Concession 1 Ellice Township, Perth County at a cost of \$14,000.³

As Sebringville grew, the congregation swelled to seventy parishioners and a Sunday school was started for thirty-five children in 1902. By 1954, a Parish House was purchased for church activities and Sunday school classes. Further expansions continued in 1963, when an addition was constructed to house the vestry, a choir room and the new heating system.⁴

In 1988, Trinity Church was designated as significant under the Ontario Heritage Act. Trinity Anglican Church is one of three 'Carpenter Gothic' examples of architecture still remaining in Ontario. Carpenter Gothic is a Canadian adaptation of the European Gothic style using wood instead of stone. Carpenter Gothic buildings are traditionally painted white with black or blue trim. Carpenter Gothic details include: fancy scroll work, barge boards, carved porch railings, and strong vertical design elements, such as board and batten siding.

Aside from its distinct construction, Trinity is also distinctive in its "Holy Trinity" theme, which dictates that all seating, banks of lights, windows and carved ornamentation are set in groups of three.⁵ Trinity's belfry and the church bell, a gift from St. James Church in Stratford in 1910, are also defining features of the building. The

church bell was also used as a summons alarm by the Sebringville volunteer fire department.⁶

In 1997, faced with a declining congregation and low attendance for services, Trinity's parishioners unanimously decided to close the church at the annual vestry meeting.⁷ Many community and church members were saddened to know that the building would likely be torn down. To ensure the church remained a part of southwestern Ontario history, the church's pastor, Rev. Elisabeth Geertsma, contacted Fanshawe Pioneer Village during the summer of 1997 about donating the building.

Trinity Anglican Church held its 125th anniversary and closing ceremony on the same day, September 28, 1997.⁸ Trinity Church was moved to the Village over a period of three days in December, 1997. The belfry and vestry were detached for the move and rebuilt upon arrival. The church remains an active part of the London community with various church services and weddings being performed at Trinity in its new location at Fanshawe Pioneer Village.

¹ Fanshawe Pioneer Village Archives (Trinity Church Building Box). *Trinity Anglican Church Oral History Preparation Notes & Questions* by Jenna Whalen; Copy of a Brochure from the Closing of Trinity Church in Sebringville (September 28, 1997).

² Fanshawe Pioneer Village Archives (Trinity Church Building Box). *Land Registry Information* Compiled by Nicole Godin.

³ Ibid; Fanshawe Pioneer Village Archives (Trinity Church Building Box) *Brief Notes on Information Obtained from Admin. Files/Education Binder*, by Jenna Whalen (January 27, 2004).

⁴ Fanshawe Pioneer Village Archives (Trinity Church Building Box). *Trinity Anglican Church Oral History Preparation Notes & Questions* by Jenna Whalen; Copy of a Brochure from the Closing of Trinity Church in Sebringville (September 28, 1997).

⁵ Fanshawe Pioneer Village, *A Commemorative Look at the Creation of a Village* (1999), Trinity Church.

⁶ Fanshawe Pioneer Village Archives (Trinity Church Building Box). *Oral History Interview Preparation Notes, Questions and Interview on Trinity Church with Bob and Marilyn Lancaster*, by Jenna Whalen (February 13, 2004).

⁷ *Brief Notes*, by Jenna Whalen.

⁸ Fanshawe Pioneer Village Archives (Trinity Church Building Box). Newspaper Article from the *Anglican Diocese of Huron Church News* (September 1997).