

# Historical Society honors Father Poulin

Dear Editor;

With the big job of gathering and writing material for the History Book nearing completion the Cardston and District Historical Society is now actively engaged in other projects among which is the location and preservation of local historic sites. First of these, the oldest home, has now been approved for provincial support. Next sought was the oldest church. Happily it turned out to be a beautiful little structure complete with a will preserved 1907 artifacts including the organ and located in just about the most picturesque setting imaginable nestled among Chief Mountain's foothills near the Old North Indian Trail. It is in the parish of Father Poulin of Cardston. The stirring qualities of this quiet good citizen who has contributed much to community betterment, improved relations between Indian and White and is presenting a splendid image of a French-Canadian we can all come to love and



St. Stephens Roman Catholic Church built 1901, moved to present location 1907.

respect, prompted the Historical Society to nominate Father Poulin for special recognition. The following was received in reply to our

correspondence re getting the church designated and also publicly honoring this good friend and neighbor. Dear Mr. Stutz:

This acknowledges belatedly your kind letter of July 5. I thank you for the opportunity of writing a little piece about our mutual friend, Father Poulin, and I hope the enclosed outline will meet your requirements. Your Society is to be commended for honoring citizens who have worked for the betterment of the community.

I thank you also for your assistance to Father Poulin regarding having St. Stephen's

Church and Cemetery recognized as an Historic Site.

Bishop O'Byrne appreciates very much your interest and help in the matter of St. Stephen's and your active support in trying to have it duly recognized as an Historic Site.

With sincere thanks,  
Yours cordially,  
(Rev.) N.R. Anderson  
Archivist

Father Philippe Poulin,  
O.M.I. of Cardston,  
Alberta.

It is a privilege to have been invited by Mr. S. Leo Stutz, Vice-President of the Cardston and District Historical Society, to contribute an article on Father Poulin, O.M.I. of St. Theresa's Church, Cardston, Alberta. When Father Poulin heard about the project he protested: "I still do not understand why I let myself into this trap. I doubt if you will find anything good to write about me. If not, do not worry; I will be happy about it. Father Latour and Father Goutier, Ste-Famille Parish, Calgary, could give you my bad side if you want to describe me the way I really am."

The many people who know and love Father Poulin will recognize that these words reflect the character of this unassuming yet manly man - the humble Oblate Father who has dedicated his life to the spiritual and temporal care of the Indian people

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agreed to drive a school bus, and did so for five years in order to get to know the children better and to meet the parents. The roads were very rough. After five years, on January 8, a disk in my back broke, causing damage to the spinal cord and paralysis of my legs. After an operation, the doctor told me I would never walk again. After a month and a half I was told to find a home to spend the rest of my life. I asked to go to the General Hospital in Calgary. Through the grace of God, the good care of the doctors and the physiotherapists and my own efforts, very slowly I started to move my legs. By the end of July, I returned to Brocket with two crutches and started to carry out my ministry, take care of the house, cook my meals and drive my car.

"When I had entered the hospital, Dr. Blair said to me: 'According to our tests you will not walk again; but the Great Physician knows better than we do. You believe in prayer. Pray and exercise, and all is possible.' I never returned to the hospital for my back since then. My desire to return to my ministry gave me the courage never to give up my exercises no matter how difficult, painful and hopeless it seemed at times.

"I had the great blessing of having lived in the company of Father Louis Levern, O.M.I. and to learn from a man of prayer and of great kindness. I visited the Indian homes with him and I studied the Blackfoot language for five years. I am very grateful for that privilege.

"During these 34 years in the Diocese of Calgary, I ministered to most of the natives and they were very happy

years. I have no regrets. I have seen great changes and improvements in their material and spiritual life. There are difficulties, but there are also great signs of hope."

His studious nature, his close proximity to and his love of the Indians have helped Father Poulin to acquire an immense fund of knowledge about the history of the Blackfoot Nation, especially the Bloods and Peigans among whom he has lived so long.

Father Poulin is the superior of the French Oblate Fathers serving in the Diocese of Calgary. He enjoys the admiration of all the priests in the diocese and the warm esteem of Bishop Paul O'Bryne. One of the highlights of his career was being chosen by Bishop Paul to represent the diocese

at the imposing ceremonies and events in connection with the sacerdotal Golden Jubilee of Cardinal Roy, Archbishop of Quebec, in 1977. While there he had the pleasure of meeting old friends of student days and the joy of visiting members of his family whom he had not seen for a long time.

May God grant Father Philippe Poulin, O.M.I. many more happy years to continue his good work.

August 9, 1978

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Father Poulin by 1907 organ in St. Stephen's Church

