

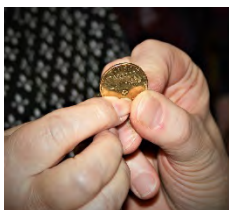
Historic Church in Richer Sold to Historical Society

The Archdiocese of Saint Boniface is pleased to announce that the historic Église de l'Enfant-Jésus in Richer has been sold to the Corporation du Site Historique Enfant-Jésus for one dollar. The signing of the transfer of property took place on April 17.



Yvonne Fontaine Godard, president of the Corporation du Site Historique Enfant-Jésus; His Grace Albert LeGatt, Archbishop of Saint Boniface; bishop Albert Fréchette; Fr. Gérard Dionne during the transfer of property.

For Bishop LeGatt, the signing marks the beginning of a new phase for the historic church: “The Archdiocese is very much aware of the pride Richer residents have in their history and cultural heritage. We are happy to collaborate with the community of Richer so that the building continues to have a life of its own, not only as the Dawson Trail Museum but as a meeting place for community events as well as occasional religious celebrations.”



Yvonne Fontaine Godard is president of the Corporation du Site Historique Enfant-Jésus, which runs the Dawson Trail Museum. “The transfer of property represents the final step in a process begun in 1995. With it, the dreams of the community of Richer have been

realized. Our residents want to preserve their heritage, which is a part of their francophone and Métis roots and identities. There's a real feeling of belonging tied up to this building. Our ancestors were baptized and married in this church and are buried in the graveyard. It's no wonder that over the years, our volunteers have given so much of their time and energy to restore the building. When restoration began, the building really needed lots of tender loving care. Our volunteers gave us the wings we needed for the church to become a beautiful museum. We're very grateful for their dedication."



Built in 1913 (see the brief history below), the Église de l'Enfant-Jésus served the Catholic community in Richer until September 17, 1995. A group of volunteers, initially named Les Amis de la prière, strove over the years to restore the historic building to its original state. The group incorporated in February 2000 as the Corporation du Site Historique Enfant-Jésus. Restoration began earnest after the church was designated a historic building on September 26, 2007 by the Rural municipality of Ste. Anne. The church now serves as a museum, the Musée Dawson Trail Museum, founded in 2013.

The transfer of property contains two conditions. Should the Corporation du Site Historique Enfant-Jésus dissolve, the Archdiocese will buy the property back for the same sum of one dollar. As well, the Corporation du Site Historique Enfant-Jésus will use the site for purposes that reflect the values of the Catholic Church.

The Archdiocese of St. Boniface has kept the cemetery but has sold the remaining property associated with the former parish. In May 2017 the lot on which stands a former convent, now a residential building, was sold. In January 2018, the remaining property was subdivided. Three lots were then sold to the RM of Ste. Anne in March 2018. Profits from the sales, totalling \$ 255 757.87, have been put in trust to ensure the perpetual maintenance of the cemetery, managed by the Parish of Sainte-Anne-des-Chênes, in Ste. Anne, Manitoba.

In recognition of the tireless efforts of its roughly 40 volunteers, \$25 000 were given on July 17, 2018 to the Corporation du Site Historique de l'Enfant-Jésus.



Rachelle Laurin, member of the Dawson Trail Museum board; Yvonne Fontaine Godard, president of the Dawson Trail Museum board; Susan McEwen, member of the Dawson Trail Museum board; Lynne Bruneteau-Robson, member of the Dawson Trail Museum board; Albert LeGatt, Archbishop of Saint Boniface; Fr. Gérard Dionne, witness to the transfer of property, Mathieu Lafrenière, lawyer and witness; bishop Albert Fréchette, witness.

The Musée Dawson Trail Museum is open Tuesdays and Thursdays, as well as Saturday and Sunday from the May long weekend to Labour Day in September. The church will be open April 19 following a Good Friday Way of the Cross that starts at 11 AM in Dawson Trail Park in Richer.

The church will host other events during the year: the Spring Artisan Craft Sale Fundraiser (May 4th), the Rummage Sale Fundraiser (May 24-26), the Canada Day Open House (July 1st) and the Richer Rough Stock Rodeo weekend Open House (August 10-11).

Information : info@sawsontrailmuseum.ca or 204-422-9369.

Website : www.dawsontrailmuseum.ca

Église de l'Enfant-Jésus: A Brief History...

The Église de l'Enfant-Jésus is a fine example of French-Canadian religious architecture. Designed by J. A. Hudon of St. Boniface, with plans revised by A. Gauthier of Lorette, the church played a significant role in the religious, educational and social life in the Richer area, especially among the Métis.

The church was constructed by volunteers using local materials. The church was officially blessed on December 14, 1913.

Closed as a parish in September 1995, the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface nevertheless permits mass to be celebrated on special occasions, such as the centennial celebrations held on June 23, 2013.



The building was designated a historic building on September 26, 2007 by the Rural Municipality of Ste. Anne.

The Église de l'Enfant-Jésus is the second church built on the site. In 1903, Fr. Alexandre Defoy built a small chapel in what was then known as Thibaultville, in honour of Jean-Baptiste Thibault, the first missionary priest in the area. The following year, the Archbishop of St. Boniface, Louis-Philippe-Adélard Langevin, had the little Enfant-Jésus chapel designated as a Catholic Mission, with Fr. Defoy as the first parish priest.

In 1905 the town, now booming with a vibrant logging industry, got its first Post Office. However, Canada Post refused to name the town Thibaultville, as there apparently were already many towns with that name. Thibaultville became Richer, in honour of a generous parishioner and former postmaster of Ste. Anne, Isaïe Richer.

By 1910, it was apparent that the little chapel did not meet the needs of a growing parish. The new priest, Fr. Joseph-Albert Beaudry, initiated the construction of a new church, which has now been sold to the Corporation du Site Historique Enfant-Jésus.