

## LONDON, ONTARIO

Lithuanians began establishing themselves in the London area before 1928. Among the first to arrive were Liūdas Mačys, Jonas Katinskas, Povilas Merkys and Mykolas Tuinyla. They met Bronė Graham, a Lithuanian woman, who had come to the area before them. D. and P. Ružinskas also immigrated before World War II. After the War, Lithuanians started arriving in London in 1947. The already-established Lithuanians welcomed and assisted the newcomers. Magdalena Čiudinaitė-Katinskienė-Statkienė was especially helpful. Fr. Vincas Rudzinskas, who arrived about 1948, organized Lithuanian Masses and helped the new immigrants find work. According to the 1951 Canadian census, there were 220 Lithuanians living in London in 1951.

**LCC.** Due to the efforts of P. Skvarnavičius, Antanas Miškinis, L. Mačys and others, a chapter of the Lithuanian Canadian Council was established in 1948. When the Lithuanian Canadian Council fell apart at the national congress in Montreal in the summer of 1949, so did its London chapter. On 30 October 1949, 69 Lithuanians from the London area participated in a meeting of the so-called “Neutral Section” and established a London chapter based on the principles of the World Lithuanian Community. The chairman was A. Patašius. Thus, the London chapter of the Lithuanian Canadian Community was among the first to be established in Canada, as were the chapters in Ottawa and Lethbridge, which began organizing in 1949. The LCC did not officially exist at the time and the various local chapters were called Provisional Organizing Committees. The LCC national executive was formed only in 1952, and the first executive committee of the London chapter of the LCC was elected on 26 May 1952.

**Activities:** National holidays, New Year’s and Mother’s Day were regularly celebrated. As well, St. Casimir’s Fair, concerts and other events were frequently organized. The first London executive committee, chaired by A. Patašius, organized a folk art display and a radio program as well as establishing contact with other ethnic groups. When L. Eimantas was chairman, the community participated in multicultural events with displays and performances. Chairman K. Kudukis re-established the radio program for Lithuania’s Independence Day. The executive committee chaired by E. Daniliūnas sent out many letters to the governments of other countries on the issue of the liberation of Lithuania. As well, he raised the issue of Lithuanian youth activities and suggested a youth congress at an LCC National Council Convention. He later helped organize a youth congress.

As chairman of the London LCC chapter, J. Butkus did much to establish the Lithuanian parish of Mary of Šiluva. He was the chairman of the first parish committee and a member of the fund-raising committee. The executive committee chaired by L. Eimantas sent out 720 letters protesting the transfer of Lithuania’s gold reserves to the USSR. With Z. Paulionis as chairman, the executive formed close ties with the major political parties in Canada, especially the Liberals. J. Aušrotas began organizing the XVI Canadian Lithuanian Days, a task continued by the executive committee chaired by A. Pocius.

Despite their small numbers, London’s Lithuanians organized four Canadian Lithuanian Days: XVI in 1970, XXIII in 1977, XXVIII in 1983 and XXXII in 1989. V. Gudelis set up a Lithuanian museum and library. Rasa Kurienė organized a Lithuanian

Youth Festival in Mississauga in 1995 attended by children from across Canada and from the United States.

**LCC chapter chairs:** A. Patašius, L. Eimantas, Andrius Petrašiūnas, K. Kudukis, Edvardas Daniliūnas, Jonas Butkus, V. Lenauskas, A. Pocius, Edvardas Petrauskas, Irena Jokubaitytė, Sofija Baliūnienė, Vitolis Dragunevičius, Miras Chainauskas, Z. Paulionis, J. Aušrotas, Paulius Kuras and Algimantas Švilpa.

**Parish.** Fr. J. Danielius used to celebrate Lithuanian Masses each Sunday, starting in 1949. The Lithuanian Parish of Mary of Šiluva was established in 1964.

**School.** L. Eimantas Lithuanian School.

**Organizations.** London chapter of the Lithuanian Catholic Women's Association of Canada; Catholic Men's Association, chairman A. Petrašiūnas; Friends of Lithuania Minor; Scouts; Lithuanians in America Union; Parish of Mary of Šiluva chapter of the Lithuanian Catholic Women's Association of Canada; supporters of the Lithuanian High School in Hüttenfeld, Germany; *Pašvaistė* choir; *Rasa* quartet; folk-dancing groups: the first led by Ona Tomkevičiūtė and Viktoras Bričkus, later *Baltija* and *Sugrižki, jaunyste*; *Vilnius* Sports Club (established in 1950, with no further news), Sports Club *Tauras*; chapter of the Lithuanians of Vilnius Alliance; Lithuanian Pensioners' Club of London; University of Western Ontario Lithuanian Students' Association; non-credit Lithuanian language courses taught by G. Petrauskienė at the University of Western Ontario; Literary Society; London Lithuanian Choir (1950-1973) as well as an associated quartet and octet directed by Jonas Petrauskas; Parish of Mary of Šiluva Girls' Choir (1969-1977); fund-raising committee; Lithuanian Foundation.

**Statistics.** The 1961 Canadian Lithuanian Days publication reported that "approximately 122 families live in London and the surrounding area. This year 2 people arrived from Lithuania." The London delegate to the 1966 convention of the National Council of the LCC reported that there were 250 members in the chapter. According to an LCC questionnaire, there were 150 Lithuanians in London in 1984, with 46% of them involved in community events.