

RODNEY, ONTARIO

The town of Rodney lies on the northern shore of Lake Erie. The LCC chapter also incorporates the Lithuanians from Bothwell, West Lorne and the other towns and villages in the area.

The first Lithuanians to arrive in the area were S. Šeštokas-Šeštakauskas with his family (1929) and P. Paltinavičius (1930). A few other Lithuanians started growing tobacco in the area before World War II. The first was Vladas Kauzenas, who did much to assist post-War immigrants. The first to arrive after the War were V. Petrauskas and A. Miškinis. And the first to acquire a tobacco farm was Jokūbas Ciparis.

LCC. The local chapter was established on 2 December 1951, when a general meeting of the community's Lithuanians was called at the farm of A. Nacevičius by Z. Mockus, P. Enskaitis, J. Gudavičius, S. Zaveckas, P. Paškauskas and A. Kojelaitis. The first executive committee of the Rodney chapter was elected at this meeting: S. Zaveckas, Z. Mockus, A. Kereševičienė, J. Gudavičius and B. Petronis. The committee decided on an annual membership fee of 2 dollars.

LCC chapter chairs. V. Andriulionis, K. Gaputis, J. Gudavičius, S. Gaidauskienė, Z. Mockus, A. Kojelaitis, H. Jasinskas, S. Paketūras, P. Paškauskas, Jonas Statkevičius, J. Ciparis and V. Ignaitis. The current chairman is Jonas Statkevičius.

Activities. Independence Day and Mother's Day events have been organized for many years. Christmas pageants and Easter celebrations used to be held when there were still young families in the chapter. On the occasion of the Independence Day ceremonies in 1970, a petition requesting that Lithuania's occupation be raised at the United Nations was sent to Mitchell Sharp, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs. In 1997, a petition asking for Canada's support for Lithuania's admission to NATO was presented to Member of Parliament Gar Knutson. Donations for Lithuanian foundations have been collected and packages sent to the Lithuanians of Suvalkai.

To make Lithuanian events more interesting, the executive committee has invited groups from Toronto, Hamilton, Detroit and London to perform. With the arrival of music teacher Liucija Žikeriūtė in 1997, the singing group *Antroji jaunystė* was formed. It has performed in Guelph, Delhi and London.

School. The LCC Rodney chapter's Dr. Vincas Kudirka School was established in 1953 and functioned for 24 years. It reopened in 1998, but lasted only a year.

Organizations. Lithuanian Farmers' Club of Rodney. A youth choir was formed in 1965 and was still performing in 1970. Singing group *Antroji jaunystė*.

Parish. The priests from the Delhi's St. Casimir's parish used to hold Masses for Lithuanians at the Catholic church in West Lorne. Fr. K. Rickus, the first priest, had some difficulties with the West Lorne pastor, who did not welcome any other priests. A Catholic church was sitting empty in Wardsville, and the pastor there was grateful for a Lithuanian presence. His successor, however, did not wish to admit any Lithuanian priest. It was only after an outcry was raised over confessions that he relented. The following priests have ministered to the community: Fr. K. Rickus, Fr. Dr. J. Gutauskas, Fr. B. Pacevičius, Fr. J. Staškevičius, Fr. A. Ažubalis, Fr. I. Mikalauskas and Fr. K. Kaknevičius.

Statistics. There were 230 Lithuanians in the area in 1956, but this number quickly decreased as those who had arrived after the War left for the cities after working on the farms. The urban centres offered steady, well-paying jobs, while work around Rodney was only seasonal.

The earlier immigrants sold their farms and moved away. The children of both the earlier and more recent arrivals married non-Lithuanians, moved to the cities and grew away from Lithuanian affairs. It is rather difficult to determine exactly how many Lithuanians there are in the Rodney chapter. A local Lithuanian writes, "You run into someone who grew up here and you do not know what he is: his family name may be Lithuanian, but he considers himself a Canadian. There are Lithuanian women married to non-Lithuanians who never show up at Lithuanian events even when they are invited."

There are 60 Lithuanians in the Rodney chapter, including the earlier and more recent immigrants. 8 families participate in Lithuanian activities. There might be more, but we do not know about them.