

# Canada Weekly

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Canada's cultural mosaic reflected in diversity of church design, 1

PM satisfied with peace mission, 3

Season's greetings from Prime Minister Trudeau, 3

The year in pictures — some highlights of 1983, 4

Top honours for five civil servants, 6

Canada's first astronauts chosen from 4 300 applicants, 6

Ottawa teacher sets world record on jog across Canada, 6

Military aid to Uganda extended, 6

News of the arts — Christmas cards, 7

Sweet sounds of music from young violinist, 8

News briefs, 8

## Canada's cultural mosaic reflected in diversity of church design

According to certain historical accounts, the Christmas tradition in Canada dates back to the arrival in 1534 of Jacques Cartier. The colonization of the New World brought many different European traditions and customs, among them the celebration of Christmas.

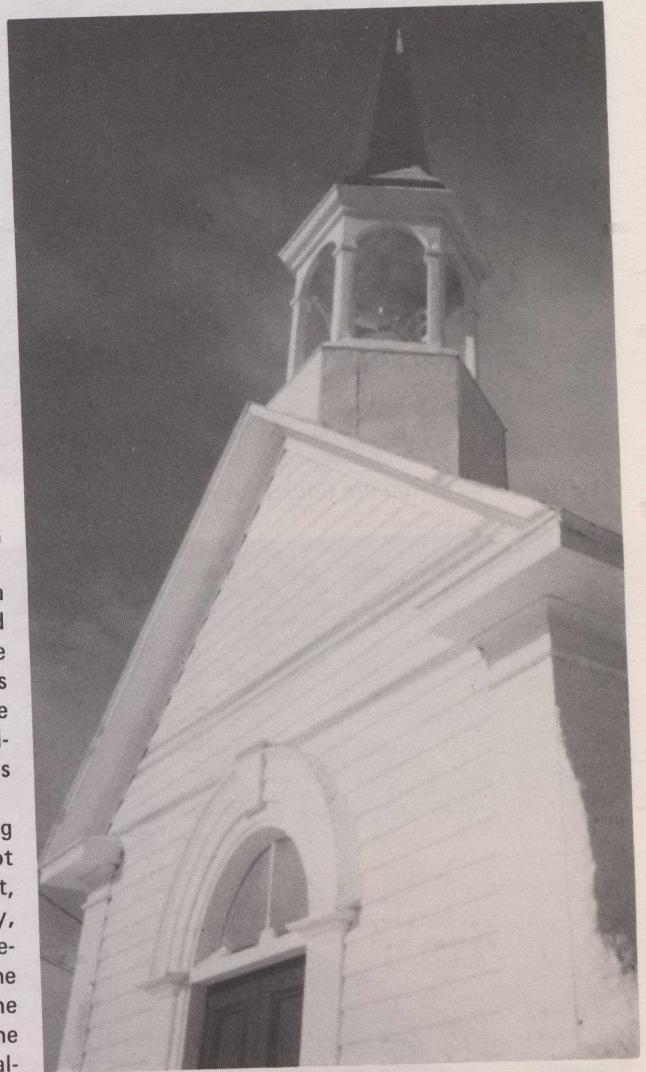
Christians arrived from Europe and built their churches. Soon afterwards, Indians who had converted to Christianity in New France began marking the feast of Christmas with celebrations of midnight mass and creations of nativity scenes displayed on church altars.

The first churches in Canada are of French origin and could date back to the Romanesque style with its purity of lines and undecorated interiors. The only exceptions are the handsome wood-carvings created as altar pieces.

Responsibility for building the early churches did not belong to one person. First, population size and density, as well as the region's resources were determined. The bishop would then select the site and orientation of the church. Then the mason calculated the height of the walls, the carpenter built the apse, spire, and roof, and the joiner created the interior decor.

Most settlers' churches were low, plain and functional structures. This style was adopted in rural areas of the Western provinces. However, the European influence was felt in larger cities across Canada, where the neo-gothic style was prevalent.

Church architecture of the European style was not suited to the harshness of the Canadian climate, however,



Canadian churches, such as this small chapel in Quebec, reflect the many different traditions that have made Canada a cultural mosaic.

so in the nineteenth century specialized architects, using modern techniques and materials, created a new style aesthetically as well as functionally adapted to the climate.

The celebration of the birth of Christ by ceremonial religious services is a popular tradition shared by many Canadian families who attend midnight services on Christmas eve.



SEASON'S  
GREETINGS



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