

100hearst



# RUE LAMBERT ST.

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## **Lambert Place**

Born on May 9, 1895, in St-Nicolas QC, Zoël Lambert was ordained as a priest in March 1920. He then went to Hearst where Bishop Joseph Hallé, then Prefect Apostolic of Northern Ontario (later Vicar Apostolic), awaited him. He quickly made him his right-hand man, entrusting him with many diocesan, religious, educational, social and political responsibilities.

In 1920, Hearst had a population of a few hundred and the Franco-Ontarian community was in its infancy. Father Lambert invested a great deal of time and effort in the colonization project of Bishop Hallé and the French-Canadian clergy, who dreamt of creating a French-speaking agricultural diocese in Northeastern Ontario.

According to them, the success of the project rested on two key principles: the Catholic religion and the French language, both of which were crucial to the survival and development of the Francophone community. In this regard, it is essential to offer Franco-Ontarian youth a school environment where these fundamental aspects of their identity are protected and can thrive. Father Lambert supported this project in various ways, notably by getting involved with the children at Saint-Joseph Convent and then during the construction of the Sainte-Thérèse school, the first separate bilingual school in Hearst. In 1929, the school board entrusted him with superintending the construction of the school with full jurisdiction and absolute authority to oversee to all the details and steps pertaining to the construction of the school. A sports and outdoors enthusiast, Father Lambert built a slide and an outdoor skating rink in the schoolyard for the children to play. Later, he organized baseball and hockey teams where young Francophones and Anglophones played together and competed with teams from neighbouring villages.

In addition, he regularly spoke on behalf of the diocese to both federal and provincial political authorities. He often travelled to

Toronto to promote agricultural settlement and to voice the demands of the Franco-Ontarian community.

After the death of Bishop Hallé in 1939, Father Lambert continued to serve the diocese in various capacities. In 1943, Pope Pius XII recognized his work and dedication by naming him Monsignor, on an honorary basis. He left Hearst in 1952 but returned in 1973 where he died in 1985.

Rightly considered as one of the founders of the Hearst diocese and one of the pillars in the emergence and development of the Hearst Francophone community, Bishop Lambert testifies by his commitment and dedication to the important contribution of the French-speaking Catholic clergy in the history of the town of Hearst. This contribution is recognized in its own way, through Place Lambert. Located in the St. Pie X district, the name of this street recalls of the builders whose work remains relatively unknown today. Let us note in closing that situated very close to Place Lambert is Charbonneau Street, named in honour of Bishop Joseph Charbonneau, Hearst's first bishop. During his short stay in Hearst, this bishop was able to count on the unfailing support of Bishop Lambert.

- *Danielle Coulombe*

## **Bibliographie**

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