

The House in Saint Prosper

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Introduction

Several years ago I had been asked to scan pictures that had been kept at the family farm in Domremy. Among these pictures was one of a large house, and at the bottom was written "St Prospère". I was told that this was Achille Godin's house, or his family's house, before he moved west.



Picture in the Godin family collection

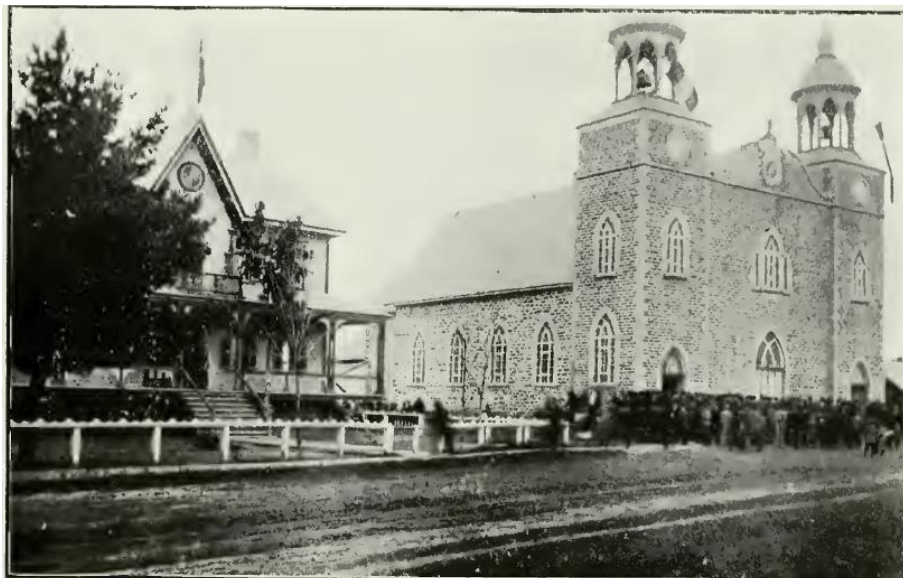
Looking at the picture of this house it seemed very curious. It appeared too large for a family house and it has a fence around the front yard. I thought it may have been a rooming house. I searched for the house in St Prosper using Google earth, and I found it almost immediately. It has been modified from the original but it is the same house.



Image from Google Earth

The house is situated next door to the stone church and there is some signage in the front, suggesting this house is the church rectory. The date on the porch roof states 1895.

I look for books on St Prosper at the BANQ (Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec) and found one entitled “Autour du Clocher Natal”, a book on the parish of Saint Prosper. Much of the book dealt with priests and prominent families in the region but it also contained a single page on the new church rectory, and included the photograph below. There is now no doubt this house was built as the rectory and could not have been the home of Achilles Godin.



ÉGLISE ET PRESBYTÈRE DE ST-PROSPER.

In the summer of 2018 our family travelled to Quebec. On the way we took a detour from the highway and made our way to Saint Prosper to see the house. As we walked around the church and the cemetery behind it, I struck up a conversation with people that were sitting on the back porch of the rectory. As it turned out they were the new owners of the house. They explained that the church hadn't been using the rectory and had sold it. It had been used by the local priest, and also housed religious lay people and nuns. Inside the house had been split into 2 sections to keep the men and women separate. I showed them a copy of the family photograph of the house and they were very excited to see it. They had only seen a few old pictures of the house, and this was the best one yet. In gratitude, the owner Patrice asked if we would be interested in seeing the inside of the old church because he was the caretaker. Of course we accepted. This was likely the church where our grandfather Bruno had been baptized, and where he married Bertha. It may have been the church where Achille married Emilie Cossette. The Cossette family were very well known in the region.



Picture of the house taken in July 2018

The Church of Saint Prosper



The church has an unusual external profile. Typical churches in Quebec have twin towers however most have a sloped central roof whereas this one has a very tall, very plain but attractive facade. Its exterior shape is also different from the typical church. The interior of the church is very nice, very clean and well maintained, and the tabernacle is quite ornate.



Patrice explained the church is used infrequently, mostly for special masses and funerals. The funerals are typically held in a chapel room behind the tabernacle, pictured below.



Chapel behind the Tabernacle

He also showed us the basement of the church. It contains a large wood boiler used to heat the church. He is the volunteer that starts the boiler several hours before a planned church event. Every year he and several volunteers cut many cords of wood and pile it up in an adjoining room in the basement.



We did not resolve why the picture of the Saint Prosper rectory was in the collection of family photos but based on its construction date and Achille's skill in carpentry it is entirely possible that he may have helped build it.

Paul Godin