



HISTORY

of the

Church of St. John the Evangelist

South Cayuga.

HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE

EVANGELIST IN SOUTH CAYUGA

The earliest religious influence in this community is recorded in 1826, when an Anglican Missionary, Rev. Bold Cudmore Hill of York, aptly referred to as "The Apostle of the Grand River", ministered to the spiritual needs of the few straggling families up and down the Grand River from Caledonia to Port Maitland. Rev. Hill was appointed by the Diocese of Quebec, of which Diocese this area was a part. His Parish was not only 35 miles long, but the travelling over mere trails and through miles of bush was both arduous and hazardous. His work continued until 1841.

In 1839, the Diocese of Toronto was formed, and Right Reverend John Strachan, D.D. was appointed as Lord Bishop. The first Rector appointed to the Parish was the Rev. C.B. Gribble, and he was credited with having made a trip back to England, and returning with a sum equivalent to \$3,500.00, a considerable amount in those days. This made possible the building of Christ's Church, Port Maitland, believed to have been completed in 1841.

This being accomplished, no time was lost in planning for the erection of the Church of St. John the Evangelist. A subscription list was entered in the records on March 2, 1843, and the amount of \$188-6-7 was subscribed by prospective members and friends. Prominent among the subscribers appear the names of Army and Navy personnel, then stationed at Port Maitland, including Lt.Col. John Johnson, Col. Wm. Imlach, Captain Francis Dobbs and many others. The Rev. C.B. Gribble was also named in the subscribers so that he undoubtedly encouraged the project, although later in 1843, Rev. Adam Townley was appointed to the Parish. With money in hand from subscribers, the contract for the new Church was let to Mr. J.M. Hyatt. The work began as early as June, 1843, and was completed in the spring of 1844, at a cost of \$175-195-9½. Donations amounted to \$175-15-7.

The site of St. John's Church was obtained by Grant from the then Province of Canada. A young man named Robert F. Cook left for Niagara-on-the-Lake, at that time the capital of Upper Canada, walking the greater part of the way, in order to file on the chosen site on behalf of the Church. He was successful, and in due course, the grant of 34 acres was issued with title vested in The Honourable and Right Reverend JOHN, Lord Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Toronto in Upper Canada and to William Arthur Johnson, Robert Freeman Cook, Joseph Fathers, John Pope, John Bowen, Mark Jukes, Michael Logan and William Blott, their Heirs and assigns. The Deed is given under the

Great Seal of our Province of Canada, Witness Our Right Trusty and Well Beloved Sir Charles Theophilus Metcalf, Baronet Grand Commander of the Bath, etc., etc., etc., at Kingston, the 23rd day of October, 1843. Mr. Cook was fortunate in the time of his application for this Grant, as we are told another party came close on his heels to apply for the same property.

Original members of St. John's Church were made up mainly of English gentlemen and their families who made the long journey by sail to Canada between the years 1836 and 1843. Among the pioneer families of record appear the names; Aikens, Bate, Blott, Bowden, Cook, Crawford, Diette, Docker, Edgar, Fathers, Gapes, Hornibrook, Imlach, Johnson, King, Logan, Lowe, Ramsey, Rowe, Stephens, Wickerson and others. These now lie buried nearby in the quiet churchyard and many of their descendants are still prominent in the Church and district to this present day.

The earliest entry in the first Parish Register records the wedding of William Arthur Johnson, Bachelor, son of Lt. Col. John Johnson to Laura Eliza Jukes, Spinster, and solemnized by Rev. Bold Cudmore Hill on December 13, 1836. Mr. Johnson was one of the first wardens at St. John's. He was afterwards ordained and became Rector at Weston, Ontario. A stained glass window was placed in the north-east chancel at St. John's to his memory.

Consecration of the Church of St. John the Evangelist took place on Monday, June 15, 1846, at the hands of the Right Reverend John Strachan, Lord Bishop of the Diocese of Toronto. St. John's was the first of three churches consecrated by Bishop Strachan in as many days, the others being Christ's Church, Port Maitland, and St. Paul's Church, Dunnville.

St. John's Church follows no particular period or style. It is a frame building with the entrance from the middle on the south side, which is very unusual in any church building. Situated due east and west, the main church body and chancel are about 60 feet by about 25 feet. Insul brick siding was put on the church in 1943 and removed in 1963, when the Church was insulated and painted white. It is one of the quaintest of Anglican churches in Haldimand County, with its coal oil lights and the original hand-made pews which were included in the original contract of the building, as were also the Credence Table and the wooden Baptismal Font. The latter was replaced by a stone font believed donated by Charles Bower. It is inscribed "A Thanks' Offering, Easter, A.D. 1867". The Bishop's Chair and the Vestibule Bench were hand-made and donated by James Crawford. The Pulpit was placed as a gift of the congregation to mark the close of the 19th century. The east wall holds two Tablets on which the Ten

Commandments are inscribed. These were presented by John Bower, Jr. of Birmingham, England, to St. John's Church, Upper Canada, 1853. John Bower had a brother, Charles Bower, at St. John's, and was also brother to Mrs. George Docker, Dr. R.D. Blott's grandmother. On occasion lighting is now furnished by the original multiple oil lamp chandeliers and side oil lamp brackets.

A solid silver Communion Set belongs to this church, consisting of two handsome glass cruets and Silver Paten, Chalice and Bread Box. The silver pieces are engraved, "Church of St. John the Evangelist, South Cayuga", but there is neither date nor name of donor.

For heating, wood, natural gas, oil stove, propane floor furnace and presently, electricity have been used. In 1959, a fire caused by an oil stove damaged the inside of the Church which was restored by generous donations and much hard work by Mr. Frank Millard and Mr. John Dawson.

No Chronicle of the Church of St. John the Evangelist would be complete without the names of the devoted Clergy who have ministered in the Parish:

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1826 - 1841 | Rev. Bold Cudmore Hill |
| 1841 - 1843 | Rev. C.B. Gribble |
| 1843 - 1855 | Rev. Adam Townley |
| 1855 - 1868 | Rev. John Flood |
| 1868 - 1878 | Rev. Noah Disbrow |
| 1878 - 1888 | Rev. Percy W. Smith who was the last to |

embrace the three charges of St. John's Church, Christ's Church and St. Paul's. Dunville. This is when St. John's Church and Christ's Church became a separate Parish and remains so to this day.

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1888 - 1896 | Rev. Maurice Britton |
| 1896 - 1914 | Rev. A.W.H. Francis |
| 1914 - 1921 | Rev. W.A. Kyle |
| 1921 - 1938 | Rev. Dr. A. Grasset Smith |
| 1938 - 1948 | Rev. G. Moore W. Smith |
| 1948 - 1951 | Rev. Arthur D. Caslor |
| 1951 - 1952 | Rev. Hamilton Powell, Laymen and Divinity |

students, including Mr. Ripley.

| | |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 1952 - 1954 | Rev. Evan Jones |
|-------------|-----------------|

| | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1954 - 1967 | Rev. F.C. Musson, the last full time |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|

Rector for the Parish. For approximately ten years, we had part-time priests - ones who took Sunday services. Two of these were Rev. Ralph Porritt and Rev. Ronald Stubbley. Divinity students took services as well, In 1967, one of these was our present Bishop, Ralph Spence.

Throughout the years of worship in St. John's, there have been

4

many visiting priests who have helped with the services. Many of these priests had cottages nearby or were visiting friends or relatives. These are names of a few: Rev. Jack Rivers, Rev. Canon Judd, Rev. John Docker, Rev. John Greenly and Rev. Bill Blott.

In 1979 -1980, it was deemed necessary to close St. Alban's the Martyr Church in Byng. and amalgamate our congregations. St. Alban's was sold and it was decided to hold services in St. John's Church in the summer months from May to September, and to hold services in Christ's Church during the winter months, from October to April. Then is when the Dunn Anglican Parish was formed, composing St. John's Church in South Cayuga, and Christ's Church in Port Maitland. The Venerable Homer Ferris was instrumental in drawing up the Agreement between the Dunn Anglican Parish, the Parish of St. Paul's and the Rector, Rev. Thorne so that the Dunn Parish has the necessary pastoral and administrative care.

In 1994, Sesquicentennial celebrations were held at St. John's during their annual Harvest Festival Service. Prior to the service, bagpipes filled the air, and following the service a group sang gospel music. Five priests were present; Rev. Thomas Webster, the newly appointed Parish priest, Rev. William Blott, the priest in charge, Rev. Robert Thorne, a former Rector, Rev. Jack Rivers and Rev. Roger McCombe, the guest speaker. A bountiful supper was served under a huge marquee.

For the Harvest Festival Service in 1998, the special speaker was The Right Reverend Ralph Spence who spoke of his fond memories when he preached here as a student.

Of the original Grant of 34 acres, thirty have been sold, leaving "God's acre" consisting of approximately four acres. The cemetery surrounding the Church is a beautiful, restful spot, shaded around the boundaries by maple and elm casting a cooling shade over the last resting place of many of the early settlers, whose love for the Church of their forefathers was so largely responsible for its establishment here.

Compiled by Hill King

Excerpts have been taken from various sources. Many were from a history compiled in 1960, when Mr. Webster Brennan and Mr. Vernon Bate were Church Wardens of St. John's, South Cayuga. In 1975, historical notes were on the back of a bulletin "Diocese of Niagara 1875-1975. Haldimand Deanery Centennial Celebration introducing St. John's Church. South Cayuga."